

TRANSNATIONAL ACTORS AND POLICY DIFFUSION: IDEATIONAL PATHWAYS  
TOWARDS SUCCESSFUL DISABILITY POLICY DIFFUSION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

A Dissertation Submitted to the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

In Public Policy in the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy

University of Saskatchewan

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## **Abstract**

Focusing on disability, this study examines the role of transnational actors in policy diffusion. Specifically, the study seeks to explain the contrast between transnational actors' failure in disability policy diffusion in Southern Africa, and their success in domesticating Millennium Development Goals as a transnational framework of development policy. I focus on Millennium Development Goal 3 (i.e., Promotion of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women) to draw contrasts and parallels between the two policy areas.

Theoretically, this study is built on a constructivist paradigm that stresses the importance of ideas, social meanings, and cultural identities in policy design and implementation. The study contrasts this paradigm with the dominant institutional approach to policy diffusion, which focuses on the mediating role of political institutions in funneling transnational influence. In so doing, the study hypothesizes that the constructivist paradigm offers a more efficacious approach to transnational disability policy diffusion than the traditional, political-institutional approach.

Methodologically, the study focuses on southern Africa and uses Malawi and Zambia as its case studies. The choice of these two cases was informed by several factors of analytical significance, among them: shared colonial legacies; close social and political ties; and similarities and diversities among their ethnic groups that sometimes spill over their borders. In addition, the two countries have important economic diversities that have a bearing on the demographic spread and the socio-cultural make up of their populations. The qualitative empirical analysis draws on content analysis and on 48 semi-structured interviews from government officials, transnational actors, and activists in disability and gender policies in Malawi and Zambia as its main data sources. The interviews were conducted from April 18 to August 30, 2018, in Lusaka (Zambia) and Lilongwe and Blantyre (Malawi). The main goal of the

interviews was to compare how transnational actors, in collaboration with on-the-ground civil society allies, orchestrated policy diffusion in the attainment of MDG 3 against their strategies in disability policy diffusion. It is also in this study's interest to investigate possible political and ideological contestations between neocolonial Western-centric agendas and autonomous African ideational domains.

This project adds to the large body of literature that relies on the role of ideas in explaining policy change as well as stability. The study, particularly Chapter 3, which outlines the theoretical framework, also adds to the important debate about how ideas engender political power, ideological contestations as well as institutional and policy autonomy.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am sincerely grateful to all my research participants and research assistants without whom this study would not have happened. I thank the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy that financially supported my PhD studies at the University of Saskatchewan. The JSGS, through my supervisor, Dr. Daniel Béland, also funded my field work in Malawi and Zambia. Second, I express sincere thanks to Dr. Daniel Béland for his intense and most caring guidance during this process. At the start of this project, Dr. Béland challenged me to think broad but also with utmost precision. With my wild ambitions about African development conceptualizations, Dr. Béland convincingly led me to refocus my attention to social policy. His own academic stance on the role of ideas in public policy influenced me towards ideational scholarship.

At the start of my PhD studies, Dr. Béland constituted my supervisory committee of incredible professors. I would like to extend sincere gratitude to Dr. Haizhen Mou, Dr. Randy Johner, and Dr. Simonne Horwitz for their tireless effort to guide me through this work since its inception. Without this team of outstanding professors, experts, and mentors, who so naturally collaborated their feedback and advice to my work, I would still have been languishing somewhere in the hallways of the JSGS unsure of my academic destiny. I would also like to thank my external examiner, Dr. Michael Bach who gave very important feedback prior to and during my doctoral defense.

My family has been incredibly supportive during my time of study. I want to thank my mother who, widowed at a very young age of 39, single-handedly sacrificed everything to send me to school. Without much education herself, her dreams are incarnated in this achievement of her son. I owe her everything. Finally, and most profoundly, I want to thank my wife Diane, my daughter Natasha, and my son Maimbo for sacrificing so much for this PhD. When we moved to Canada, Maimbo was only four months and Natasha three years. Subjected to brutal Saskatchewan winters, and at the time without a family car, they showed no sign of giving up and they did not complain. My family endured long days and months of loneliness without a husband and a dad, to give me space and time to study and write. My wife worked so hard to pay our bills and to make our ends meet. This PhD is as much their success as it is mine and, in love, I dedicate it to them.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AFRODAD	African Forum and Network on Debt and Development
CAF	Central African Federation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DFID	Department for International Development
DPOs	Disabled People's Organizations
FEDOMA	Federation of People with Disabilities in Malawi
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGOs	International Non-governmental Organizations
JCTR	Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
MACODA	Malawi Council for Disability Affairs
MACOHA	Malawi Council for the Handicapped
MCC	Millennium Challenge Compact
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MMD	Movement for Multiparty Democracy
MOGCDSW	Ministry of Gender, Children, Children, Disability, and Social Welfare
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
PDA	Persons with Disabilities Act
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

PROPEL	Promoting Rights and Opportunities for People with Disabilities in Employment through Legislation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAFOD	Southern African Federation of the Disabled
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programs
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TEVETA	Technical, Entrepreneurial, and Vocational Education Training
TNAs	Transnational Actors
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United National High Commission for Refugees
UPIAS	Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation
WHO	World Health Organization
ZAPID	Zambia Agency for Persons with Disability
ZNWL	Zambia National Women’s Lobby

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Parts of this introductory chapter constitute material forming the basis of the following publication: Haang'andu, Privilege (2018). Transnationalizing Disability Policy in Embedded Cultural- Cognitive Worldviews: The Case of Sub-Saharan Africa, *Disability and the Global South*, Vol.5, No. 1, 1292-1314.

### 1.1. Background to the Study

#### *1.1.1. Disability in Global Perspective: Issues, Spread, and Policy*

Like other policy areas of international interest, disability research and activism has increasingly become more transnational. However, while scholars have advanced specific conceptual frameworks for understanding disability, universally acceptable policy measures remain elusive. Policy makers argue about state-driven versus charity-oriented responses (Borsay, 1986; Oliver, 1986); and about disability and its various intersectionalities such as gender, HIV/AIDS, and urban-rural experiences (Nixon et al., 2014; Yoshida, Hanass-Hancock, Nixon, & Bond, 2014). At the international policy level, despite established international standards such as the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, scholars and policy makers face context-specific normative challenges in driving policy.

Despite these challenges, the concerted transnational efforts at advancing egalitarian norms for disability policies are important and need both international and domestic support. Due to transnational influence, in 1981, the United Nations commemorated its first Year of Disabled Persons, marking a key step towards internationalizing disability norms (Stone-MacDonald, 2014). A further important transnational development in thinking about disability and inclusive human development happened in 1994, when 92 governments and 25 international organizations signed the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policies, and Practices in Education stressing the

paramount need for equity and access to education for children living with disabilities (Stone-MacDonald, 2014). While transnational actors (TNAs)<sup>1</sup> develop and promote these norms, countries grapple to domestically design social programs in response to these global discourses. Whatever we conceptualize of transnational disability activism, any meaningful disability social policy must be premised on social theory of disability and every social theory of disability must take into account historical developments as well as contexts. This is important for TNAs because, while they hold particular policy positions, sometimes what is pragmatic is what already exists contextually.

### ***1.1.2. Disability and the Global Development Agenda***

*“Taking subjects as agents of self-definition whose practice is shaped by their own self-understanding, the whole notion of development is problematic”, Escobar, 2011.*

Until the 1980s, the disability discourse was dominated by paternalistic attitudes (Vanhala, 2010). Up to this time, disability activism centered around charity targeted at helpless “impaired” persons. The disability discourse, however, started to change from a paternalistic view characterised by welfare policies (e.g., social security) towards a human rights and equality perspective in the late 1960s (Vanhala, 2010). This push for existential equality against structural and cultural biases grew over time and culminated into the United Nations’ CRPD that came into force in 2008.

With this paradigmatic change in the disability discourse and in policy approach from paternalism to the social model that stresses equality, citizenship, and rights, disability became a

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<sup>1</sup> Transnational actors are conceptualized generally as “organizations (multilateral, state, or non-state) or individuals that seek to develop and advocate well-elaborated policy proposals in multiple national contexts” (Orenstein, 2008:1). In this study, TNAs could be inter-governmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations, researchers and scholars working on international policy topics and, indeed, civil society organizations with international reach.



major issue on the global development agenda. At the global level, several indicators attest to this change. Specifically, the United Nations, through its multiple specialized agencies, has taken the lead to restructuring the global development approach to respond to disability. Prior to the enactment of the CRPD, the United Nations General Assembly came up with the World Program of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (United Nations, 1982), the International Decade of Disabled Persons, 1983-1992 (United Nations, 2004), the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 1994), among others (see also Cleaver, 2016).

Although no one United Nations unit singularly carries the disability mandate, the World Health Organization (WHO) has taken the lead in developing various instruments with specifics for implementing disability guidelines for the United Nations member states.<sup>2</sup> Cleaver (2016), for example, mentions the WHO's Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability cluster, the Disability and Rehabilitation team, and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health as WHO initiatives. These WHO instruments, designed to reduce barriers for persons with disability in development planning through improving data collection and analysis, generating comparatives in participation between the persons with disability and those without disabilities, have had significant reach within the United Nations system and to other development organizations.

Although this change in the approach to disability has yielded strong systemic changes in industrialized western countries, little has been done to evaluate its impact in non-western settings. To assume that global development agendas should seamlessly benefit all societies is problematic. The disability discourse has become transnational with little attention to understand

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<sup>2</sup> I return to this point in greater detail in 2.3.4. when I discuss key global actors.

the contextual implications, and therefore, to evaluate its performance from an ideational<sup>3</sup> perspective in non-western settings. As Grech (2009: 772) observes, “the disability studies debate remains an almost exclusive focus on Western settings, located with associated historical, societal, and cultural assumptions”. This makes it necessary to undertake an analysis of the transnational nature of the disability discourse; to examine how ideational interactions affect the prospects for diffusion<sup>4</sup> of this global disability discourse in non-western settings. This is important because, as has been argued, development is about power distributions and self-determination, self-respect, and mutual recognition (Escobar, 2011; Hirschman, 1997). Escobar (2011), for example, argues that if people are self-interpreting subjects whose actions shape their self-understanding, then the entire economic discourse must be rethought.

There are many scholars who argue that the development discourse has usurped social reality and reduced it to a technical problem that it assigns to a few experts who merely exercise power and control over the developing world (Escobar, 2011; Hirschman, 1997; Grech, 2009). Escobar (2011) argues that the global development discourse has reduced the diversity of reality to categories of poverty and development and transformed all reality into development discourse. As an alternative to this development discourse, he suggests a more inclusive conceptualization of development where the starting point of all development theory should be the local context which forms core identities of self-understanding. As such, context must be taken seriously in the

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<sup>3</sup> This research is shaped by ideational explanations for human action. What this means is that people’s actions are influenced by their cognitive and/or affective elements that shape their worldviews and that these influences are often historically constituted. As Parsons (2007) argues, ideational elements such as practices, symbols, norms, grammars, models, beliefs, ideas, and/or identities carry people’s meanings about the world and shape their actions. Similar to path-dependence created by institutionalism, people’s actions are also embedded in consequences of collective norms and ideational elements.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this research, I use the term “policy diffusion” to denote a process through which a policy created in one particular jurisdiction, possibly through the agency of transnational actors, spreads to other policy jurisdictions to either establish or alter an existing policy framework. As Orenstein (Orenstein, 2003) points out, policy diffusion takes place when new policy ideas are invented and tested in a specific environment and, then, when these ideas are spread or emulated by other policy jurisdictions.

construction of theory (Escobar, 2011). It is therefore, important that scholars, in addition to general evaluations of policy success, take ideational perspectives seriously. Otherwise, as Bates (2001) argues, we would not know if our efforts are helping resolve problems or are contributing to hindering prospects for true development. Context-responsive development can, as Sen (2001) proposes, be identified by two important marks: it must be evaluative, and it must be effective.

#### *1.1.2.1. Evaluative*

Development must be evaluated by how much it makes people free economically, socially, and politically. It means that social welfare and incomes are insufficient as a measure of development because, as Sen (2001) argues, it is possible to have a high income and to still suffer strong social and political disadvantages. He gives an example of African Americans and Africans in countries like South Africa. While African Americans have higher incomes than their counterparts in Africa, they have a lower life-expectancy than their counterparts. The reason is that African Americans live in a social and political environment that systematically disadvantages them in many ways. Sen (2001) argues that development is a total package of social, economic, and political well-being. He offers a very strong criticism to Rawls (1987) who, in his *Political Liberalism*, suggests the “priority of liberty” if political and economic liberties clashed. Sen argues that we cannot that easily prioritize liberties but must take them all together as constitutively fundamental to development. The rights-based approach to disability policy, which is the pre-occupation both of the CRPD and of the political institutional approach, falls into this trap.

#### *1.1.2.2. Affective*

By the affective component, Sen (2001) argues that we must evaluate development by procedural opportunities it offers to the realization of agency. A simile he uses is that being lavishly fed as a slave could be worse than being a hungry free man. In other words, development is a process that requires the full participation of the people. It cannot be done on their behalf by somebody from outside through aid or policy imposition. The people themselves must take an active role in self-definition and shaping their own development destiny.

Sen's idea about agency is analogous to libertarian Nozick's (1974) criticism of utilitarianism using his example of the experience machine. If human life was all about a state of consciousness, then we could simply create a machine that would provide some sort of desired experience. Nozick (1974) argues that, on the contrary, human beings, in the process of action, do not only seek utilities or states of consciousness but that they become persons of a certain sort in the process of action. Development, therefore, rather than being a universalistic idea based on the industrial West, is a process that requires all societies to be agents of their own destinies. This point is crucial for all policy diffusion. Much as ideas inevitably interact and policies diffuse, especially in this globalized world, the final policy instruments must be context-responsive and enhance, rather than replace agency. It is important, therefore, that we carefully identify how TNAs have packaged the disability discourse as a part of development policy. Does the approach include or exclude the crucial context-specific agency?

#### *1.1.3. From the Global to the Regional: Disability Discourse Spread to Africa*

Due to transnational influence, many African states have recently started to show some willingness to address concerns about disability (Mamboleo, 2009), most visibly through

domestic legislation. Collectively, African leaders declared 2000-2009 the African Decade of Disabled Persons, before adopting the Plan of Action at the Pan African Conference on the African Decade of Disabled Persons two years later (African Studies Centre Leiden, 2008). In 1996, Zambia became one of the first Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries to adopt rights-focused disability legislation, the Persons with Disabilities Act of 1996. Besides prohibiting discrimination based on disability in education, healthcare provision, and employment, it established a supreme statutory disability monitoring body, the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAFOD). The Persons with Disabilities Act (PDA) of 1996 was amended to respond to new demands, resulting into the 2012 PDA. In December 2003, Kenya also passed rights-based disability legislation, the Persons with Disabilities Act (PDA) of 2003 (Mamboleo, 2009). The Kenyan PDA prohibits discrimination in employment based on disability. The Act also entitles persons with disabilities accessible environments to enable them to have access to buildings, roads and other social amenities as well as assistive devices and other equipment to promote their mobility. Similarly, Malawi passed rights-based disability legislation in 2012. However, it had earlier passed the Handicapped Persons Act of 1971, which was largely influenced by the medical approach rather than the rights approach. Additionally, the Constitution of Malawi guarantees the right to non-discrimination based on disability under section 20.

Despite its challenges with statistics on the prevalence of disability,<sup>5</sup> South Africa, one of the earliest countries to sign and ratify the CRPD and the Optional Protocol in 2007, has adopted the most comprehensive legal and social programs within the African continent that it inherited from the apartheid welfare state (Kelly, 2016). South Africa's constitution prohibits unfair

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<sup>5</sup> <https://ubuntucentre.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/country-report-final-baseline-country-report-on-the-crpd-cabinet-approved-3.pdf>.

discrimination against people based on disability or health status. Between 2009 and 2014, South Africa had a ministry dedicated to disability, which was dissolved in 2014 after parliamentarians criticized the ministry for its underperformance and inefficiency. The disabilities portfolio subsequently moved to the Department of Social Development. South Africa is an outlier case with its generous disability programs inherited from the apartheid-era welfare system (Kelly, 2016). Through the disability grant, the government provides a means-tested, non-contributory monthly subsidy of R1500 (\$100) to eligible persons with disabilities, mainly those that are unable to work or to support themselves financially through other means (Kelly, 2016). There is a significant amount of literature discussing disability programming in South Africa, especially its effectiveness in disability and intersectionalities (Christianson et al., 2002; Nattrass, 2006; Watermeyer, 2006; Hanass-Hancock, 2009).

What is clear from the transnational disability trajectory is that the disability discourse in Africa has been strongly influenced by the western definitions, ideals, and goals for inclusive development, and rights pursuits. A close examination of the Zambian, Malawian, and Kenyan disability legislation and policies, for example, indicates that they are, almost in their entirety, cut-and-paste documents from the United Nations' CRPD. This observation is of analytical importance for this study.

#### ***1.1.4. Mapping Conceptual Gaps and Approach***

While the creation of transnational norms and standards is a crucial step towards influencing domestic disability policy, a lot has been taken for granted about the transnational shift in disability policy. In the disability policy diffusion process, there is a need to clearly map out the role of transnational actors. At the theoretical level, the disability literature is too preoccupied

with the medical-social dichotomy and argumentations about what constitutes disability (Shakespeare, 2013; Stone, 1986; Stone-MacDonald & Butera, 2014). At the policy level, the preoccupation is rehabilitation, human rights, and universal inclusiveness (which also correlates with the medical/social theoretical polarity). Disability scholarship has not paid enough attention to conceptual challenges of the transnational side of policy, such as epistemological contestations, ideational conflicts, and identification of strategic mediatory actors to enhance policy diffusion. As a result, disability scholarship lacks explanatory frameworks for understanding why transnational disability policy diffusion performs as it does in comparison with other policy domains within similar socio-political environments. One reason for this conceptual oversight is the assumption that disability norms should easily spread once structural and institutional hurdles, such as legislative lacunas, have been removed. Disability policy, however, faces not only structural and institutional but ideational hurdles, too.

Focusing on southern Africa, this study examines the role of transnational actors in disability policy diffusion. More precisely, the study investigates the variation between transnational actors' failure in disability policy diffusion in Southern Africa on one hand, and their success in domesticating Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a transnational framework of development policy, on the other. I focus on MDG 3: Promotion of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women to draw specific conceptual and strategic policy parallels that led to individual country performance for Malawi and Zambia, the two countries under study.<sup>6</sup> The study purposefully chooses this MDG and not the other seven for several reasons. First, because the study is about policy success and failure, I needed two policy areas with contrasting success rates. However, it would be unfair to compare successes of two policy areas

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<sup>6</sup> Section 4.2. below provides a detailed explanation for the choice of the two cases of Malawi and Zambia.

whose appearance on the transnational scene is punctuated by huge time difference. These two appeared around the same time, 2000 for MDGs and 2006 for CRPD. The fact that they have had fairly an equal time for implementation legitimates comparison. Second, both policy areas face similar ideational challenges (e.g. cultural-cognitive biases, stereotypes, and marginalization). My interest here is not why gender equality and not disability made it among the core MDGs. Rather, my interest is to compare policy processes that transnational actors and their domestic allies have undertaken to reverse women marginalization and those that transnational actors and their allies have deployed the last two decades in disability advocacy. While it might be more politically savvy to address women's issues for funding purposes, the reasons why women remained marginalized were not exclusively political. How did transnational actors transcend the political processes to attend to sociological causes? E.g., child marriages, gender-based spousal violence, sexual-cleansing/HIV, Female Genital Mutilation *et cetera*. These are entrenched social/cultural issues that political processes alone could not resolve. What did transnational actors do? Transnational disability actors face similar challenges.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

The central problem of this study is understanding determinants of success and/or failure in transnational policy diffusion. Why do persons with disabilities remain so deeply marginalized socially, communally, and publicly? Why have TNAs not performed as well with disability norms diffusion as they have with gender norms? Why does disability activism in southern Africa not evoke similarly robust ideological and systemic commitments as gender equality?

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a reinvigoration of interest in transnational actors and their impact in international politics (Risse, 2007). There is compelling scholarly



evidence that TNAs such as international organizations (e.g. the World Bank, IMF, and UNESCO), advocacy networks, and epistemic communities can have a significant effect on state policies, on the creation of international norms, and on the subsequent diffusion of these norms into domestic practices (Boli & Thomas, 1999; Checkel, 1997; Checkel, 2005; Evangelista, 1995; Finger & Princen, 2013; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Florini, 2012; Haas, 1992; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Klotz, 1999; Litfin, 1994; Price, 1998; Risse, 2007; Risse-Kappen, 1995; Willetts, 1996).

TNAs have been successful in the promotion and diffusion of, for example, environmental policies, international security, and human rights of certain groups like refugees, and Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI). The TNA literature indicates that TNAs use a range of tools to influence policy diffusion, including conditionalities and ideational persuasion (Checkel, 1997; Checkel, 2005; Orenstein, 2008). In the use of coercion, the U.S. government and its allies, for example, suspended foreign aid to Uganda in 2015 when that country passed punitive laws for same-sex relations. Facing international pressure, the Ugandan courts quickly ruled the new laws unconstitutional. About ideational persuasion, Orenstein (2008), for example, suggests that TNAs adopt mechanisms such as publications, conferences and seminars, partnering with domestic organizations and technical assistance to propagate their policy ideas and conceptions of policy.

While scholars (e.g. Orenstein, 2008) have produced robust empirical studies on how transnational actors influence policy diffusion in various domains like pensions, scanty work exists on comparative analysis of TNAs' performance between policy domains. Such comparative analysis is important for two reasons. First, it helps to determine the conditions under which TNAs succeed to affect outcomes and policy objectives in socio-political settings.

Second, it also helps in mapping out theoretical generalizability. For instance, it is important to determine whether a specific set of standard TNA policy diffusion mechanisms could be applied to a range of different policy areas; or to explain why certain policy areas are more resistant (or amenable) to TNA influence than others. This research contributes to this scholarly effort.

### **1.3. Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This study intersects two subfields of public policy research: critical disability studies and transnational diffusion. The study's main research question is: Why has transnational disability policy diffusion in southern Africa been less successful than other TNA policy engagements? Put differently, and in a broader way, why do some TNA policy diffusion efforts succeed while others fail within the same political environment?

To examine this puzzle, I use the United Nations' MDGs. Arguably, the MDGs (and their successors, the Sustainable Development Goals) are the single most important transnational instruments for development cooperation in the first two decades of the 21st century that best capture the dynamics of transnational policy diffusion and how those policies are diffused at the local level to produce specific results. Against these policy programs, particularly MDG 3, the study compares the TNA disability policy diffusion at the domestic level. Did TNAs employ similar or different conceptual models for policy diffusion in the two policy domains? What factors account for this variation in policy effectiveness? Why has MDG 3 been so successful compared to the almost imperceptible progress in state-driven social policies for disability?

Drawing both from the disability literature and the scholarship on transnational policy diffusion, I hypothesize that transnational disability policy diffusion efforts have over-emphasized what Risse (2007) calls the domestic structure hypothesis, and what Orenstein

(2008) calls the veto player approach. Veto players are domestic actors who exercise a formal veto in policy processes (Orenstein, 2008; Tsebelis, 1995). I will refer to both concepts as political institutions henceforth. The political institutional argument holds that political institutions “mediate, filter, and refract the efforts by transnational actors and alliances to influence policies in the various issue-areas” (Risse, 2007: 269). According to this hypothesis, political institutions are necessary and sufficient gateways towards successful policy diffusion. The main task of TNAs, therefore, is to seek strategic engagement with political institutions and to create among them winning coalitions for the acceptance of new policies and norms.

While these mechanisms are important and might succeed in some policy domains, they are, as argued by some scholars, non-replicable in others (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) and are not sufficient to explain TNA impact in all policy domains. Keck and Sikkink (1998) argue that the political institutional hypothesis fails to explain why some transnational networks operating in the same context succeed while others fail. As Risse (2007: 270) argues, the political institutional hypothesis stresses “formal aspects of political and social institutions rather than the substantive content of ideas and norms embedded in them”. This study, therefore, seeks to test an alternative hypothesis built on constructivists ideational factors (e.g. cultural contexts, identities, norms, symbols, and language) to explain variation in TNA success in policy diffusion. Parsons (2002: 48) defines ideas as “claims about descriptions of the world, causal relationships, or the normative legitimacy of certain actions”. As Béland (2010: 148) clarifies, “ideas participate in the construction of the world through which actors make sense of their material, social and political environment”.

About the disability policy domain and MDG 3, the study hypothesizes that ideational constructions are the principal incubators of social meaning, identities, and norms that most

proximately shape the experience of gender disparities and the status of people with disabilities in southern African societies. Indeed, “the legal framework provided by states and international institutions has [...] constitutive effects on transnational actors and relations” (Risse, 2007: 245) but that has not empirically prevented TNAs from seeking strategic opportunities with other non-state actors to advance their goals. The data in this study shows that TNAs as moral and knowledge entrepreneurs use various communication strategies to achieve their goals (Risse, 2007). For example, as will be seen in the empirical chapters of this study, TNAs used multifaceted approaches (e.g. influencing and supporting legislative reforms like the Gender-Based Violence Acts; engagement with NGOs; technical cooperation with host countries; capacity building; and engagement with church and traditional leaders) in advancing gender equality in pursuit of MDG 3 in southern Africa.

Beyond formal engagements with political institutions TNAs mobilize micro-level social and epistemic pressure on various relevant actors. TNAs engage in what some scholars (see Baumgartner & Jones, 1991) call policy imaging, which is an argumentative framing technique to generate innovative ideas, identities, and norms. As Keck and Sikkink (1998) argue, TNAs negotiate both formally and informally, the social, cultural, and political meanings of their shared pursuits. Through this re-framing process, TNAs could convince their target audiences to change their perceived interests, entrenched perceptions, and create an environment for policy acceptability and support. The question, therefore, is: could it be the case that this ideational perspective on policy change lacks in the disability domain? From the data, we could conclude that policy diffusion for culturally-charged issues like disability requires much more than the study of formal political institutions. More importantly, policy entrepreneurs like TNAs need to engage with strategically-positioned social entrepreneurs capable of formulating new cultural

frames around disability issues. It becomes important, therefore, that TNAs design policy diffusion strategies that do not start and end with political institutions but ones that target and prioritize sociological factors that may facilitate ideational change.

As constructionist policy scholars like Deborah Stone (2002) and Frank Fischer (2003) argue, social positions, carried by contextual narratives and social meanings, are the principal means for defining and contesting policy problems. Aldersey et al. (2014) also suggest that any relevant and successful support for disability, either financial or programmatic, should consider social and cultural constructions of disability. Ideational constructions, and not political institutions, are more important gateways into the African cosmology. They could either permit or stifle exogenous interventions. Prescriptions of laws by transnational actors and political institutions are inadequate to deconstruct entrenched social meanings. In fact, in many African countries (e.g. Zambia, Malawi, Ghana), statutory legal systems run alongside customary ones. One is codified; the other not. One is easier for TNAs to directly engage; the other not; one is state-centric; the other ideational. The implications for policy change processes are deep. I further argue that the political institutional-engagement framework is western-centric and ignores fundamental ontological heterogeneity important for policy legitimacy. The interplay between discursive forces around domestic ideational factors and transnational human rights frames in shaping disability social policies is, therefore, implacable.

#### **1.4. Dissertation Organization**

This study is divided into nine chapters. In the first, I provide a summary of arguments and a background to this study, outlining my conceptual hypotheses and research questions. I also place the disability discourse in the context of the global development discourse and draw

development implications for Africa. In the subsequent chapter, I review global disability scholarship and how transnational actors have proliferated disability norms. Therein, I craft my conceptual framework. In the third chapter, I present my theoretical framework where I argue for the importance of the role of ideas in public policy. In the fourth, I outline my adopted methodological approaches. I also discuss socio-political and economic country contexts and existing disability policy approaches in Malawi and in Zambia. In the fifth, I introduce the origins of the idea of gender equality, both among academic feminists and gender advocates, and how it grew into a big universalized human rights issue. The goal of this chapter is to highlight the importance of identifying the genesis of an idea in successful policy diffusion. In the sixth and seventh chapters, I successively present empirical evidence on the two cases obtained through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. In the eighth chapter, I present a comparative analysis of the findings while in the ninth I summarize my arguments and make an argument for an Afrocentric approach to policy diffusion, especially in disability and in gender. I also highlight some shortcomings of the study. Drawing on the study's findings, I further suggest policy implications for disability policy and activism in southern Africa.

Lastly, as an academic endeavor, this dissertation is aimed at generating material for scholarly publication. Material in this dissertation has already started to be published in academic journals and as book chapters. So far, some parts of Chapters 1 and 2, and significant parts of the theoretical framework laid out in Chapter 3 constitute material that formed the basis for an article entitled "Transnationalizing Disability Policy in Embedded Cultural- Cognitive Worldviews: The Case of Sub-Saharan Africa" in *Disability and the Global South*, Vol.5, No. 1, 1292-1314. Specifically, material from pages 44-57 of the dissertation formed the basis of this publication to explain why western-centric conceptualizations of development policy in disability policy

diffusion are untenable to southern Africa. Second, the empirical part of Chapter 6 formed the basis for an article submitted in January 2019 to *Disability & Society*, entitled “Why Transnational Actors Perform Poorer in Disability Than in Gender Policy Diffusion - Inter-Policy Comparative Case of Zambia”. This article, which compares the success rates of transnational activism in gender and in disability policy domains in Zambia, is still under peer review. Further, I reorganized material in Chapter 8 to draft a book chapter entitled “Towards an Afrocentric Disability Activism: Opportunities and challenges of Transnationalizing disability advocacy in Africa” in a volume edited by Karen Soldatic and Kelley Johnson titled *Global Perspectives on Disability Activism and Advocacy*, by Routledge. Specifically, pages 173-192 of this chapter constitute the core of the argument for Afrocentric disability policy. The book is expected in June/July 2019. Further, a significant part of the introduction to Chapter 9 on page 195 constitutes material used for the abstract of the publication entitled “Transnationalizing Disability Policy in Embedded Cultural- Cognitive Worldviews: The Case of Sub-Saharan Africa” in *Disability and the Global South*, Vol.5, No. 1, 1292-1314. Finally, I am reworking Chapter 7 into a journal article for submission to *Global Social Policy*.

### **1.5. Summary of the Findings**

The data analyses show overwhelming evidence that social factors significantly influence the experience of gender relations and of disability in Malawi and Zambia. This study reveals that these deep social factors make it hard to apply universal and exogenous policy remedies. Most prominent of these social factors across the cases and policy domains are religious beliefs, customs, entrenched worldviews, and traditional practices. These characterizations are not merely perverted attitudes but entrenched attributes of these societies’ worldviews constituting

their collective identities as societies. The data also shows that transnational actors' policy diffusion approaches, particularly those of disability transnational actors, are often in discord with the data. Particularly, Chapters 6 and 7 reveal that the Western-centric approach to transnational policy diffusion is problematic.

Further, there is evidence that the rural-urban divide has significance in the retention of hardline ideological, cultural, and customary identities. Given the two countries' disparities in levels of urbanization and demographic spread between rural and urban settings, there is a noticeable degree of variation in the pace of ideological evolution. In addition, I find that different religions impact on male-female relations differently. For example, Catholic men are more likely to engage in gender-based violence than their Muslim counterparts. The study further indicates that both Malawi and Zambia have good policy instruments for enhancing disability social programs and for enhancing gender equality in response to the universalistic demands for disability rights and gender equality. While gender participants acknowledged important transnational actors and governments' efforts to resolve gender inequalities from a multifaceted approach, participants in disability policy overwhelmingly said implementation was haphazard and progress insignificant. While gender policy entrepreneurs have made significant efforts to incorporate outreach to grassroots to alter ideational factors, disability policy entrepreneurs are stagnated in the West-centric human rights frame of advocacy. Certainly, the promotion of human rights is key to both gender and disability policy diffusion. However, the study finds that framing plays a significant role in the acceptability of diffusion of human rights messages. In this case, non-individualist societies are less amenable to individualist messages that could yield different results in the West. Policy diffusion, therefore, requires questioning the often-unquestioned universalistic assumptions.



Further, the process of policy diffusion raises important questions about conceptualizations of institutions and power relations in policy diffusion. The study exposes weaknesses in assumed policy change processes that only result in instrumental adjustments without altering ideational foundations of societies whose belief systems determine the goals and objectives of institutions they choose to live by. Because transnational policy actors could at the same time be agents of policy ideas of powerful states and actors, transnational policy diffusion introduces power asymmetries. Finally, policy diffusion is a two-faced process: it has the supply and the demand sides. The supply side means that a policy entrepreneur notices a situation (problematic or not) needing a policy response and proposes a solution. The demand side has two components, the active and the inactive sides. The inactive demand is where a given society does not actively seek change to its status quo, but an outside policy proposer seeks to initiate change based on perceptions about a situation the outside actor sees as problematic. The active demand side, on the other hand, is where a given policy community actively seeks policy solutions to its perceived problem. These two have implications for understanding power relations in policy diffusion and for determining success and failure for policy diffusion.

Based on these findings, I argue that the degree of success of transnational policy diffusion is based on how skillfully transitional actors frame policy ideas to avoid negative public sentiments and to also avoid stagnating at the policy instrument level. In addition, I suggest concrete mechanisms of diffusing policies that would highly optimize policy diffusion yields, particularly in ideationally entrenched societies like Malawi and Zambia.

## **CHAPTER 2: TRANSNATIONAL ACTORS, DISABILITY ACTIVISM, AND THE ROLE OF IDEAS IN POLICY DIFFUSION – A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Parts of this chapter include material that formed the basis for the following publication: Haang'andu, Privilege (2018). Transnationalizing Disability Policy in Embedded Cultural-Cognitive Worldviews: The Case of Sub-Saharan Africa, *Disability and the Global South*, Vol.5, No. 1, 1292-1314.

### **2.0. Introduction**

The primary goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature pertaining to the core enquiry of this study, i.e., TNAs and ideational perspectives to disability policy diffusion. The literature is thematized, covering the core tenets of TNAs' role in policy diffusion, disability and development, and disability activism. First, I present a generic conceptualization of TNAs before narrowing the concept to disability TNAs. The chapter then discusses transnational disability activism, explaining competing approaches in disability scholarship and activism. I discuss the place of disability in the global development paradigm. I also discuss the main actors in transnational disability advocacy. Understanding global dynamics of disability scholarship and activism is important for explaining TNA influence on African disability policy development. Subsequently, I justify why it is important to spin TNA disability policy diffusion through an ideational approach.

### **2.1. Transnational Actors**

Transnational actors are conceptualized generally as “organizations (multilateral, state, or non-state) or individuals that seek to develop and advocate well-elaborated policy proposals in multiple national contexts” (Orenstein, 2008:1). In this study, TNAs could be inter-governmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations, researchers and scholars working on international policy topics and, indeed, civil society organizations with international reach. In

addition to global human rights and health organizations such as Human Rights Watch, there are many international disabled people's organizations (DPOs) proliferating disability norms (Grech, 2009; Devlieger, 2010). However, local organizations executing mandates of international funding agencies through technical and financial support could, depending on an issue, also be generally categorized as TNAs even if their original design is to work in the local jurisdictions. The importance of TNAs in policy influence, both at the international and national levels, is increasingly being highlighted by scholars (see, Boli & Thomas, 1999; Checkel, 1997; Checkel, 2005; Evangelista, 1995; Finger & Princen, 2013; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Florini, 2012; Haas, 1992; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Klotz, 1999; Litfin, 1994; Price, 1998; Risse, 2007; Risse-Kappen, 1995; Willetts, 1996; Foli, 2016; Béland & Orenstein, 2013). However, scholars disagree about how TNAs diffuse policy norms. While some argue that TNAs leverage their political and economic power through conditionalities to coerce target countries to adopt and implement policies (e.g., Aina, Chachage, & Annan-Yao, 2004; and, Mosley, Harrigan, & Toye, 1991), others argue that TNAs are increasingly using ideational approaches to diffuse norms (e.g., Béland & Orenstein, 2013; Orenstein, 2008; Risse & Sikkink, 1999).

In political science, there is an argument advanced by realists and those focusing on hegemony, that international institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank are primarily tools of the powerful in the global political economy (Krasner, 1976; Waltz, 2000) and that they serve to advance the interests of economically and militarily powerful states. For example, hegemonic stability theory argues that the international system cannot operate without powerful states providing the incentives and rules for cooperation (Krasner, 1976). Krasner (1976) particularly argues that we need hegemony to design and enforce the rules of the system. Similarly, Waltz

(2000) confirms that power and interest override any institutional laws in the international system. He goes on to state that international organizations are merely instruments of their founders and those that sponsor their continued existence. Beyond this overt power exertion, there is the often-unquestioned factor of ideational influence through the promotion of ideational perspectives founded on particular cultures, hermeneutics, and worldviews. I explore this point in greater detail in Chapter 3.

One area where the argument about TNAs' mechanisms for policy diffusion is rife is in the spread of human rights norms. Do TNAs such as the United Nations and regional organizations coerce member states to ratify and adopt international human rights treaties or protocols or do they ideationally persuade and convince them to buy-into "new" logics? How much of treaty signing is due to economic and/or epistemological acquiescence against the real need to design and implement domestically-responsive policies? Does the widespread ratification of international human rights treaties, contrasted by negligible adherence by parties, impute anything on this TNA diffusion approach contestation?

This debate should be encouraged in the disability rights discourse. In the disability policy domain, some scholars perceive TNA policy diffusion as a normal pursuit of global human rights through the universalization of the tenets of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (e.g. Vanhala, 2010); others argue that universalization of such international norms is constitutive of power dynamics (Grech, 2009; Soldatic & Grech, 2014; Meekosha, 2008). The latter contest the legitimacy of normative and epistemological homogenization of what they see as primarily Western disability ideologies and practices to the rest of the world (e.g. Devlieger, 1999; Meekosha, 2008; Grech, 2011; Meekosha, 2011; Soldatic & Grech, 2014). Given this context, this study seeks to understand

why, in the existing approaches, transnational disability policy fares poorer than other policy domains like gender.

## **2.2. Global Disability Models of Activism**

In the last 40 years, TNAs in the disability sector have proliferated concepts about what constitutes the disability phenomenon and how the policy community ought to respond to remediate its impacts. At the global level, we can abstract three major approaches to disability activism and scholarship: the charity, medical, and the social models (Barnes & Mercer, 2005; Borsay, 1986; Oliver, 1986; Rioux, 1996; Shakespeare, 2013; Stone, 1984; Stone-MacDonald & Butera, 2014; Walker & Townsend, 1981). Some participants in Malawi and Zambia suggested a fourth model they termed the African traditional model. I do not discuss this last model here, but I draw lessons from it in the empirical chapters.

### ***2.2.1. The Charity Model***

One of the phrases I heard most frequently during my field work was ‘disability is not inability’. The charity model of disability is counterintuitive to this slogan. The model seeks to provide monetary, material, and compassionate support to persons with disability, mostly through international and local charity non-governmental organizations. Among the biggest such disability charity organizations is the Leonard Cheshire Disability (Formally Leonard Cheshire Foundation until rebranding in 2018) which is the main sponsor of over 270 Leonard Cheshire Homes in over 55 countries (Leonard Cheshire Disability, 2018 Report)<sup>7</sup>. Leonard Cheshire Disability played a key role as a platform that resulted into the revolutions leading to the

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cheshirelondon.ca/resources/leonard-cheshire-international-committee/>.

formation of the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in the 1970s (Shakespeare, 2006). It was UPIAS that subsequently led to the foundation of the social model of disability (Shakespeare, 2006). Conceptually, the charity model is driven by the understanding that disability is some form of lack (Titchkosky, 2003). Socially, this engenders sentiments and perceptions that persons with disabilities have a deviation from the expected and the normal that needs aiding. The premise, for charity, as one participant mentioned, is pity that the other is unable to do certain things on their own due to a disability.

Although this model remains very dominant in developing countries, it has been heavily criticized as inadequate and as a counterproductive way to address the needs of persons with disabilities (Oliver, 1986). During the May 2018 Africa Community-based Rehabilitation Conference in Zambia, slogans such ‘rights not charity’ and ‘nothing about us without us’ were frequently used. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, disability activists held demonstrations opposing charity fundraising (Shakespeare, 2006). The anti-charity model has been endorsed by numerous southern African DPOs and NGOs.

Unlike the rights-based social model, the charity model re-enforces compassion and pity (Kisanji, 1998). The charity model has heavily influenced TNAs’ approaches to policy diffusion in southern Africa. Grech (2009: 778) argues that both the medical and charity models “were only instituted in developing countries through colonial humanitarian models that brought church organizations and western medical professionals to the fore.” Devlieger (1995) argues that the charity model, with its Western assumptions, destroyed that pre-colonial “self-help” social infrastructure on which persons with disabilities relied. Grech (2009) also contends that the charity model frequently segregates disabled people from their families and communities, inflicts much suffering and destroys traditional ways of caring for persons with disabilities.

### ***2.2.2. The Medical Model***

This approach historically emerged in Britain (Bury, 1996). Its foundations are associated with the increased impairment occurrences during World War II and with concomitant advancements in medical specialties (Bury, 1996; Ingstad, 1995). Here, disability is understood “as a defect or sickness which must be cured through medical intervention” (Kaplan, 1999 in Stone-MacDonald, 2014: 3). Disability is detected based on specific characteristics and “assigned to a category such as physical disabilities, mental disabilities, or sensory impairments” (Stone-MacDonald, 2014: 2). Primarily, disability is inherent in the body and treatment remediates it so that one is better able to function within society (Stone-MacDonald, 2014). In this model, disability is also a personal pathology that affects one’s body, subsequently imposing participation restrictions (Loeb et al., 2008). Disability is, therefore, a bodily condition, diagnosable and treatable through various medical and rehabilitative interventions.

Since the 1960s, medical disability research has proliferated and it has historically driven and characterized special education as well as rehabilitation health sciences. To date, most university disability programs in the industrial democracies fall under health and rehabilitation sciences, stressing the medical value attached to disability. While doing my fieldwork for this study, I encountered several Western disability researchers in Zambia and almost all of them exclusively in health research. During the same period, I took part in two disability conferences, both of which were anchored on disability and health research. Likewise, most disabilities social programs around the world require medical certification for applicants’ eligibility for benefits (Kelly, 2016).

Despite its popularity among TNAs, this model has been criticized and objections to its epistemological foundations have been cause for significant reforms in disability studies and

policy advocacy. The strongest criticisms are attributed to Michael Oliver (1996), who was very instrumental in the subsequent conceptual distinctions between ‘impairment’ and ‘disability’. Ferguson et al. (1995) also criticize the model for its clientele approach, ‘disabling’ connotations, and its alienation of people with disabilities from families into hospitals and residences. Criticisms against the medical model resulted both in research methodological changes and in changes of how disability organizations interpreted and identified themselves (Ferguson et al., 1995). Today, even health-oriented disability TNAs incorporate the social model dimensions. The adoption of the CRPD by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006 institutionalized this conceptual shift.

### ***2.2.3. The Social Model***

The social model emerged as a theoretical response to the medical model (Shakespeare, 2013). Despite the immense contribution that the medical approach made to heighten the attention of disability and the remedial interventions for functional restoration, it was frowned upon as demeaning and patronizing (Aldersey, 2014; Michalko, 2009; Oliver, 1986; Stone, 1984; Vanhala, 2010). The genesis of the social model, with its focus on social, economic, and political aspects is largely associated with the British organization, UPIAS (Shakespeare, 2013). UPIAS arose, originally, as an opposition to charity fundraising by the then Cheshire Homes Foundation (Shakespeare, 2013). Shakespeare (2013) observes that although UPIAS, formed in 1974, conceptualized the departure from the medical model to the social model, the exact coinage of the social model in its current form where it makes stark distinctions between *impairment* and *disability* is attributed to sociologist Michael Oliver, who only joined UPIAS in 1983.



The social approach to disability primarily contends that disability is, more than anything else, socially constructed, and that the larger burden of the experience of disability is socially imposed (Gabel & Peters, 2004). As a marker of identity, disability creates a social position for an individual that is constructed in response to widely held notions of normalcy (Michalko, 2009). As Garland-Thomson (1997) explains, “disability, then, is the attribution of corporeal difference — not so much a property of bodies, as a product of the cultural rules about what bodies should be or do” (in Stone-MacDonald, 2014: 6). This model’s assumption is that disability is not inherent to the individual but that it is inherent to the social structure (Rioux, 1996).

The main goal of the social model is to champion human rights for persons with disabilities, mainly through support and sponsorship (Barnes, Mercer, and Shakespeare 1999). The United Nations has been the main architect of this mission, “which, bolstered by lobbying from the international disability movement, has the most significant role in making disability rights a global issue” (Grech, 2009: 778). For example, along with other DPOs and TNAs’ advocacy, the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in 1993 “have been instrumental in shifting attention away from the medicalization of disability and, for the first time, providing a ‘political guideline’ or template for most national disability policies” (Grech, 2009: 778). In the same vein, the CRPD is an extraordinary step, “being the first universal disability human rights instrument, a single, legally binding instrument, equal to other major conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child” (Grech, 2009: 778).

In what he calls the “hegemony of normalcy,” Rod Michalko (2009) argues that disability experience is different but that its difference is demeaned by sociological interpretations that

marginalize it and render it a “useless-difference”; “useless-difference” because the experience of persons with disabilities is socially understood as a distortion and not a valid unique way of perception. The social model of disability, therefore, contends that there is something wrong with the society, rather than the person with a disability, needs correction (Rioux, 1996). According to this model, disability, contrary to the view that it is ontologically inherent or biologically assigned, is socially constructed (Albrecht, Seelman, & Bury, 2001). Social disabilities studies seek to redefine disability to foster not simply socio-economic inclusion, but also existential egalitarianism. Scholars and advocates use various policy instruments, including anti-discrimination legislation and equalization social programs, as responses to the demands of individuals and groups of persons with disabilities for the removal of barriers to equality. This model is not without critics. The most pertinent of the criticisms is by Grech (2009: 775):

Notwithstanding the inspiration it has provided for disabled people, the exportation of the model runs into problems of the most fundamental sort. First of all [...], it is grounded in and highlights the concerns of western, white, urban, educated disabled academics in industrialized settings. The second problem is that it promotes a “universal discourse”, which, like most standardized notions, runs the pervasive risk of being contextually and culturally inappropriate. As Lang (2001, 19) questioned, ‘is it possible to construct a grand theory of disablement that is valid and pertinent for all impairment groups, across all cultural settings?’

Other scholars argue that criticisms against the medical model are ill-founded and a misrepresentation of the model. Shakespeare (2013), for example, argues that medical sociology has never conceptualized disability purely as a bodily limitation but has always recognized the social setting in which disability is experienced. Shakespeare (2013) further argues that the social model exaggerates the distinction between *impairment* and *disability*. He argues that the social model downplays the role of impairment in the lives of persons with disabilities; that even in a perfectly accessible world where society did not discriminate against persons with disabilities, and persons with disabilities had every possible aid, persons with disabilities would still be

disadvantaged compared to those without disabilities. The removal of social barriers does not amount to the elimination of disablement (Shakespeare, 2013; Bury, 1996).

A further argument is about the arbitrariness of the medical model versus social model dichotomy. Nordic countries, for example, fall under neither of the two models (Shakespeare, 2013). Instead, their disability policies are anchored in their traditionally strong social democratic welfare states with negligible traces of disability activism. Similarly, disability groups in the United States, follow more the “minority group model” patterned after the country’s political history of civil rights movements and individual rights pursuit than either the medical or social models (Shakespeare, 2013). Shakespeare, Bury, Grech, and other critics are not arguing that social and political barriers are trivial to creating an existentially viable environment for persons with disabilities, but that disability theory must address the more complex nuances of existentialism. Beginning to seek ideational responses to why disability TNAs perform less successfully than other policy entrepreneurs is a positive step towards that goal.

#### ***2.2.4. Key Global Actors in Disability Activism***

In his foreword to the first World Report on Disability, renowned astrophysicist Stephen Hawking, who himself lived with severe physical impairment after being diagnosed with a Motor Neuron Disease at age 21, wrote: “it is my hope that, beginning with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and now with the publication of the World Report on Disability, this century will mark a turning point for inclusion of people with disabilities in the lives of their societies” (World Report on Disability, 2011: ix). The CRPD and the World Report on Disability are the two single most important disability documents harnessing global action for

disability rights through the United Nations agencies and other TNAs. By any comparison, the United Nations and its specialized agencies such as World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the International Labor Organization (ILO) are the most significant global actors in the disability discourse. These United Nations specialized agencies work independently and collectively for the rights of persons with disabilities, pursuing improved access to healthcare, inclusive education, employment, and participation in family, community and public life (WHO, Global Disability Action Plan 2014-2021).

While the CRPD is an international treaty binding member states to international standards for addressing disability, the World Report on Disability, jointly produced by the WHO and the World Bank Group, provides the evidence for progressive policies and programs that can improve the lives of people with disabilities, and facilitate implementation of the CRPD (World Report on Disability, 2011: xi):

While the CRPD reinforces our understanding of disability as a human rights and development priority, the World Report on Disability suggests steps for all stakeholders – including governments, civil society organizations and disabled people’s organizations – to create enabling environments, develop rehabilitation and support services, ensure adequate social protection, create inclusive policies and programs, and enforce new and existing standards and legislation, to the benefit of people with disabilities and the wider community (World Report on Disability, 2011, Accessed 7/24/2018).

Other United Nations agencies like the ILO focus on employment rights for persons with disabilities while UNICEF focuses on social protection mechanisms for children living with disabilities and their families. In 2015, UNICEF embarked on a global program dubbed, “post MDG – disability beyond 2015”, to address the needs of children with disabilities.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/disabilities/index\\_70277.html](https://www.unicef.org/disabilities/index_70277.html).

In addition to these intergovernmental global actors, there are many international non-governmental organizations involved in disability activism. Many of these organizations take part in global disability activism from a special-interest perspective such as early childhood education, mental health, and gender. Examples of these are the Global Campaign for Education, Sight Savers, Light for the World, Leonard Cheshire Disability, and Camfed. At the July 24, 2018 Global Disability Summit in London, over 700 delegates from governments, donors, the private sector, NGOs and DPOs, gathered to discuss major disability themes<sup>9</sup> (e.g. dignity and respect for all; inclusive education, and economic empowerment).

Other actors include professionals like rehabilitation experts, medical personnel, and academic researchers and practitioners. Together, these global actors and DPOs constitute a global disability rights force that seeks socio-economic development “inclusiveness”<sup>10</sup> of the 1 billion persons with disabilities globally, representing 15 percent of the global population (WHO, 2011; UNICEF, 2015).

### ***2.2.5. Comparative Policy Consequences of the Three Models***

Despite their conceptual disagreements, all three models, through the agency of TNAs, have influenced disability policy designs in southern Africa.

#### ***2.2.5.1. Charity and State Responsibility***

During my field work, many TNA respondents criticized the charity model as perpetuating dependency among persons with disabilities. This was contrasted with views from a few TNAs

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.light-for-the-world.org/global-disability-summit-2018>; Accessed 7/24/2018.

<sup>10</sup> The definition of inclusiveness is highly contested in disability studies. I am interested in this study, with the spin Grech (2009) takes to critique the exportation of development paradigms to the global South purporting to enhance ‘inclusiveness.’

and DPOs who argued that the extreme and disproportionate poverty levels among persons with disabilities justified philanthropic initiatives. Indeed, although material handouts are not a sustainable way to respond to poverty, it is widely agreed that persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by poverty (ILO – Zambia, 2013; World Report on Disability, 2011). In addition, disability is more common among women, older people and households that are poor (WHO global disability action plan 2014-2021). In general, lower income countries have a higher prevalence of disability than higher-income countries (WHO global disability action plan 2014-2021). This, notwithstanding the fact that countries in southern Africa are already among the poorest in the world with an average per capita income of less than US\$2,000 (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012). It is, therefore, justifiable that persons with disabilities, like other sectors of southern African countries receiving charity goods, also benefit from these programs. In other words, singling out persons with disabilities as recipients of charity goods is unfair if the rest of the population where they live do receive handouts. If anything, governments in southern Africa are themselves recipients of substantial amounts of donor funds and other material aides, a more institutionalized form of charity. Given the desperate severity of poverty circumstances of southern African nations, and the ethical questions therefrom, material needs are, therefore, inextricable from any perceptible social approach to disability policy.

However, two fundamental problems arise from the charity model. First, it could easily re-enforce negative attitudes of pity versus deontological approaches towards the needs of persons with disabilities. Although sympathy could have positive outcomes, transnational disability movements are unified on the need for independence and autonomy of persons with disabilities. For example, a leader of a DPO in Zambia remarked during an interview:

The culture of sympathy – it influences actions even of policy makers. Law makers debate on sympathy lines rather than deontological or rights basis... We judge people

with disabilities... We don't expect them to do certain things non-disabled do. Once I went to the bank and an attendant said to me; who will sign the documents for you? I asked him back, 'who signs for everyone else?' You see, the problem is society is so full of sympathy for us to the extent that they stifle our independence. Instead of advocating for accessibility for us, they are so quick to offer a hand to help us up the stairs [...]  
(Disability Rights Watch -Zambia, 2018).

The social model goes a step further to stress rights over “sympathy” or “privilege”. Second, and like the participant above mentions, the charity model can potentially introduce complacency for permanent and structural responses for citizens’ needs driven by the state.

The question about dependence, though difficult to resolve in dire poverty situations must also be understood structurally. It is partly the institutionalized charity towards African countries through foreign aid that creates systemic hurdles to endogenous and autonomous policy development. For example, to meet rights demands of persons with disabilities, a country needs predictable and stable economic systems with a dependable tax base (Besley and Perssons, 2014). However, as Besley and Perssons (2014) argue, the inherent flow of aid and dependence on foreign aid by low income countries explains why the developing countries tax so little. For many African countries, foreign aid constitutes a significant fraction of GDP and sometimes larger than domestically generated tax revenues. This availability of aid diminishes the incentive to take actions that could increase the domestic revenue base that these countries need to meet social services and rights claims of their citizens.

For purposes of my theoretical framework that intersects ideas and power relations, aid also serves two important functions in policy diffusion dispositions. As Booth (2011) argues, we need to understand donor aid’s influence on recipient countries in two ways. First, we need to understand how aid’s acceptability predisposes recipient countries to logics of negotiation with the giver. Second, we need to understand how it predisposes recipients to local resource management. In the post-industrial global economy where some countries’ needs continue to be

sustained by Western donors, economic aid can play a significant role in the change of policy instruments, perhaps not as much in societal ideational disposition. Nonetheless, economic incentives provide a potential explanation for why some countries accept policy proposals made by powerful economic and political forces. At the same time, as stated above, this donor aid could weaken poor countries' incentives for strengthening domestic institutions for economic self-determination and sustenance. The 'charity' question, therefore, must be holistically approached to understand the systemic damage it can cause to nations and individual attitudes. Therefore, although aid from NGOs, INGOs, and other bilateral and multilateral sources is important, it must not be a substitute for accountable state-driven and structural responses towards development and social needs.

#### *2.2.5.2. Medical and Social Models and their Role in Enhancing Rights*

While the medical model expresses itself more through rehabilitative programs<sup>11</sup>, the social model seeks legislative reforms that promote equality and inclusiveness. Disability scholars discuss these two approaches either separately or comparatively, often stressing the need to focus on socio-economic inclusion. During the data collection exercise for this study, the buzz word among disability advocates was 'leave no one behind', derived from the United Nations' CRPD. The social model generally leads directly to the positive rights-based focus on disability policy. The general ideology driving transnational disability advocacy is the understanding of human equality (Devlieger, 1999; Michalko, 2009) and entitlement to equal treatment. As a result, states adopt protective legislation which constrains public and private behavior and attitudes toward persons with disability.

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<sup>11</sup> For example, the Canadian Council for Global Health Research (CCGHR) runs multiple rehabilitation locations in Africa, including in Zambia, often in conjunction with the host government's health ministry.



In her comparative study of Canada and Britain about why some disability organizations use courts for rights claims while others do not, Vanhala (2010) stresses the centrality of the legal and court systems in the restoration of equality in Western disability advocacy. In other words, the sociological implication of discrimination against the disabled is injustice; the mechanics for redress are therefore restoration of justice. However, the notion of rights and justice in an African set up, which is built more around a normative than a positivist community, is different. Court systems, as we know them today in the *polis* as institutions of arbitration, are an abstraction of Western civilization that specifies positive individual rights. As Richard Scott (2005) argues, institutions as models of rationality are cultural systems, designed to pursue social purposes. Therefore, the efficacy of one institution created for a particular social context might not necessarily be replicated in a different context (Fischer, 2003; North, 1994; Thelen, 2009; Weyland, 2008).

The fact that disability TNAs, through various legal frames and discourses have adopted the universality of Western disability models has important analytical value. The key observation in this regard is that despite the innumerable commendable disability projects in health research, rehabilitation, and education programming, there is a lack of analyses regarding the extent to which TNA disability policy influence has translated into tangible social policy infrastructure in comparison with non-disability policy domains. One way to begin to respond to this conceptual chasm is to examine the dynamics that drive policy diffusion and to understand how they interact with domestic factors. Therefore, I turn to discussing why and how ideas matter in policy change and to situating the relevance of this study both in the transnational diffusion sub-field as well as in the disability domain. This study adds to the large body of literature that relies on the role of

ideas in explaining policy change as well as stability (Campbell, 2004; Hall, 1993; North, 1987; Stone, 2002; Weyland, 2008).

### **2.3. Ideas and Policy Change – Why they matter for Disability Policy Diffusion**

*“As in the material world, satisfying the aspirations of one group may mean denying those of another in the realm of what Raymond Breton called the ‘symbolic order’” – Miljan, 2012:6*

In policy design and implementation, ideas matter in so far as they depict the cultural-cognitive identities of policy communities. As Campbell (2004) and Scott (2005) argue, institutions do not just have legislative or regulative elements; they also have cultural-cognitive and normative identities. Cultural-cognitive factors often act as background normative constraints in policy change. On the other hand, policy makers look to other ideational domains to resolve new social and institutional problems (Weyland, 2008). Institutions, policy communities, and societies constantly draw lessons from other ideational jurisdictions to better their own situations (Hall, 1993; Rose, 1991; Scott, 2005).

In their path-breaking theory of decision making under uncertainty, Kahneman and Tversky (1984) argue that human beings are prone to cognitive biases that propel them to use heuristics<sup>12</sup> in determining solutions to current problems.<sup>13</sup> Other ideational scholars have argued for what they term ‘bounded rationality’: that human rationality is incapable of comprehensive information computation to solve decision challenges and, therefore, that they approximate informational vectors and rational decisions (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991; Simon, 1955).

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<sup>12</sup> Heuristics are cognitive shortcuts that systematically bias our judgments (Mercer, 2005). For example, with the heuristic of representativeness, rational humans habitually assume that situation A, because it resembles situation B which they earlier encountered, belongs to the same class as B regardless of situation A’s unique complexities. This frequently distorts accuracy in decision-making processes. Socially, groups of people tend to act in pattern with established or with familiar practices.

<sup>13</sup> Parsons would categorize cognitive biases under the psychological explanatory framework.

Because of bounded rationality and the propensity to appeal to heuristics (such as representativeness<sup>14</sup>, availability<sup>15</sup>, and anchoring;<sup>16</sup> for more discussion on heuristic, see Watkins & Bazerman, 2003), policy change is argued to be incremental rather than dramatic (Lindblom, 1959a; Pierson, 2000; Thelen, 2009). The understanding that policy situations are characterized by cultural-cognitive factors and by bounded rationality is essential for understanding transnational policy pathways and diffusion. At the organizational level, processes of decision making through bounded rationality and heuristic appeals are more complex than at the individual level because ideas are contested and changes in policies, laws, norms, and institutions create winners and losers (Trebilcock, 2014; Weyland, 2008).

Because policy changes are contested, policies must be negotiated to minimize impacts of loss (Trebilcock, 2014). The underlying logic of this argument is that people (including established cultures and social norms), organizations, and established rules and systems (or institutions) have preferences and goals, often historically and politically constructed (Béland & Ridde, 2016), such that any change to the status quo advantages some while disadvantaging others (Przeworski, 2006; Trebilcock, 2014). Attachment to the status quo stands in the way of ideational change. Further, ideational influence often carries political and epistemological power.

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<sup>14</sup> Representativeness is the tendency by rational actors to decide the probability of one incident occurring based on familiar experiences. For example, people often judge that the more A resembles B, the higher the probability that A is a member of B or was produced by B even when A possess intricate complexities. Culturally, people's behaviors are formatted on familiar practices and customs, and they judge present and emerging challenges in the lenses of experience.

<sup>15</sup> Availability is humans' tendency to assess probability based on how easily an object or class comes to mind. The more visible or salient an event, the easier it is to recall, which leads us to overestimate its frequency. People downplay the significance of independent analysis and sometimes innovation because models for their current problems have been tried and tested elsewhere for a doption and a daptation. Availability creates patterns of action and, subsequently, habituates.

<sup>16</sup> Anchoring is the tendency to reuse our previous assessment of one problem for a nother without adequately revising our initial beliefs to accommodate additional information. Anchoring creates habits, norms, and established patterns.

As earlier argued, in the global political and economic realm, it is often the ideas of the economically and politically powerful nations or opinion-drivers that reign supreme.

Transnational policy change, therefore, often presupposes power dynamics. I take a cue from Béland and Ridde's (2016) insight on how ideas weave through the policy process of agenda-setting, decision making, policy formulation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. This research restricts itself to two stages of the policy process – that is, agenda-setting and policy formulation.

Regarding agenda-setting (Béland & Ridde, 2016; Kingdon, 2003; Stone, 2002), ideational experts focus on how ideas influence the definitions of problems and how actors frame proposed solutions, what Jones and Baumgartner call 'policy imaging' (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991). Specifically, and cognizant of the divergent scholarship on ideas and policy change, whether incremental<sup>17</sup> through path-dependence<sup>18</sup> (Bates, 2001; Campbell, 2004; Lindblom, 1959b; North, 1987; Pierson, 2004) or through punctuated equilibrium<sup>19</sup> (Scott, 2005b), scholars consider how endogenous and exogenous causal factors interact to produce policy demands either towards policy change or maintenance of the status quo. At this stage, actors highlight a situation that needs public attention and policy intervention and work towards catapulting the subject into the attention domain of policy makers (Béland & Ridde, 2016).

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<sup>17</sup> Incrementalism is the notion that change of policy or institutions takes place in some and not all dimensions of an institution (which Scott, 2005 define as regulative, normative, or cultural-cognitive) over a given timeframe. With incrementalism, today's institutional arrangements differ from but largely resemble those of yesterday. Incremental policy change entails stability due to lack of change in most of the dimensions.

<sup>18</sup> Path dependence is the process "whereby contingent events or decisions result in the establishment of institutions that persist over long periods of time and constrain the range of actors' future options, including those that may be more efficient or effective in the long run" (Campbell, 2004:65). Once a given decision has been made, future decisions are constrained along a particular path that adheres to or are shaped by the initial decision.

<sup>19</sup> Punctuated equilibrium, also known as revolutionary change, is the simultaneous change of policy or of institutions in most or all dimensions over a given timeframe (Campbell, 2004).

After the decision-making step, the next step of the policy process focuses on the formulation and the development of policy solutions (Béland & Ridde, 2016). Ideational change considers pre-existing factors while appealing to heuristics of representativeness and availability. Consideration of pre-existing factors demands that ideational actors and change agents consider sufficiently representative socio-political and ideational contestations to produce a position that minimizes losers and negatively impact on them. Ideas, therefore, are a crucial factor in transnational policy diffusion, particularly in the diffusion of culturally entrenched phenomena such as MDG 3 and disability. Shared beliefs about social order play a key role in the shaping of attitudes toward policy changes. As such, policy change proposals, particularly at the stage of agenda setting and policy formulation must, if they are to gain popular acceptance, be tied to ideational foundations (Trebilcock, 2014). Logically, therefore, transnational policy entrepreneurs need to identify the most strategic policy agents in each society who wield the greatest discursive influence in the process of interest, identity, and preference transformation. This is one reason why a static, linear political-institutional approach is inadequate for the analysis of policy diffusion.

Because of the inherent limitations of the institutionalist approach to policy diffusion, this study conceptualizes an alternative policy diffusion approach that goes beyond political institutions and embraces both endogenous cultural ideas as well as transnational norms. In Chapter 3, I lay out a comprehensive alternative theoretical framework built on Craig Parsons' ideational explanations for political behavior as well as John L. Campbell's bricolage and translation. In this framework, I explore the constructivist model of policy diffusion against the political institutional approach to investigate why some TNA policies fail while others succeed

within the same socio-political jurisdiction. Although I discuss these terms in detail in Chapter 4, a brief introduction here is important (ideas already sufficiently covered).

In his analysis of how various ideas can shape institutional change, John L. Campbell (Campbell, 2004) discusses translation and bricolage, two mechanisms according to which different ideas are combined and reframed in particular institutional contexts. On one hand, Campbell argues that when new ideas are introduced in a new cultural and institutional context through diffusion processes, these ideas are typically translated into local practice in varying degrees. From this perspective, translation is about adapting foreign ideas to a particular normative or institutional setting so that they can blend in (Clarke, Bainton, Lendvai, & Stubbs, 2015). Bricolage, on the other hand, is about combining different pre-existing ideas and institutional components to create something new (Campbell, 2004). In other words, bricolage relates to the capacity of actors to create something new out of the ideational and institutional legacies that already exist in their environment (Carstensen, 2011). Ideas, therefore, constitute an integral part of the understanding of the policy change process.

## **2.4. Conclusion**

This literature review highlights three important points. First, that transnational actors play an important role in policy diffusion processes in general, and in this case, in disability policy diffusion. However, the mechanisms of policy diffusion are contested. Second, disability as a concept has evolved in the last 40 years, starting with the charity model and now the social model around which TNAs are galvanized through internationally binding legislation like the CRPD and regional ones like the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights' Protocol

to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa adopted in 2016.

Importantly, all the three key disability models face serious challenges and, I argue, none of them should be proliferated simplistically. Third, ideas play an important role in this process of transnational policy diffusion. Because human beings are inherently subject to cognitive limitations, policy making is a dynamic process following particular policy paths but remaining open to policy-learning processes as ideas traverse policy jurisdictions. The challenge I am now faced with is to articulate how this policy process works, why disability TNAs have fared poorly in comparison with other policy TNAs, and what the way forward is for southern Africa in building a more productive disability policy framework. The idea is not to divorce the southern African disability activism from the global discourse, but to see how this global discourse could still be relevant while disability communities appeal more to locally-responsive policy measures.

## CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: AN ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSNATIONAL DISABILITY POLICY DIFFUSION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

A significant part of this chapter includes material that formed the basis for the following publication: Haang'andu, Privilege (2018). Transnationalizing Disability Policy in Embedded Cultural- Cognitive Worldviews: The Case of Sub-Saharan Africa, *Disability and the Global South*, Vol.5, No. 1, 1292-1314.

*“...the Western disability studies and its tenets, notably the social model of disability and the language of ‘rights’, are transferred indiscriminately from North to South and absorbed almost unquestionably by development agencies, Southern organizations and other intermediaries” - Shaun Grech, 2011: 88.*

### 3.0. Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is twofold. First, it seeks to demonstrate that the existing disability diffusion approach by TNAs in southern Africa, which stresses the political institutional model, is inadequate and problematic. Under this objective, I do two things. First, building on the concepts discussed in Chapter 1 about context-responsive development, I problematize the movement of ideas from the global North to the global South and show how they become receptacles of power contestation. Since transnational disability activism is built on “inclusive development” claims, I reposition the concept of disability outside the industrialist and income-regimented view of development characteristic of the West. The political institutional model assumes the purpose of policy engagement is what Rawls (2009) in *A Theory of Justice* describes as the pursuit of primary goods. According to Rawls (2009: 92), primary goods are those things “which it is supposed a rational<sup>20</sup> man wants whatever else he wants”. He enumerates them as: rights and liberties, opportunities and powers, income and wealth. Rawls’

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<sup>20</sup> Rationality is itself a heavily contested concept in social science. While some schools of thought faithful to rational choice thought hold the stringent self-interested individual that maximizes personal gain in every endeavor as the rational man, others, influenced by Herbert Simon and Lindblom argue that rationality is bounded. What is rational is by no means universal. Otherwise, some cultures could claim superior rationality even without taking full account of what constitutes rationality for other societies. The idea of rationality is complex, dynamic and is quite divisive among political scientists, sociologists, and policy scholars.



argument about using policy to pursue primary goods reveals much similarity with the dogmatism of the positivist political institutional approach. This approach is characterized by the notion of instrumental rationality that bases its decisions on the cause and effect calculus, or as Campbell (2004: 94) puts it, “based on anticipated consequences for prior goals.” Despite its assumed natural inherency and universality, this way of thinking is an abstraction created by Western civilization and specific to Western positivist social constructs (Campbell, 2004; Hirschman, 1977).

Second, this chapter proposes a new theoretical approach for better diffusion outcomes. I make an argument that follows directly from the preceding observation that ideas are inherently abstractions of specific historic and social constructions and, therefore, their diffusion necessarily contested.<sup>21</sup> In response, the chapter introduces a theory that bridges two sub-fields: transnational policy and critical disability studies. This alternative model encompasses both the cognitive and normative aspects of decision-making dynamics but stresses the latter. Ultimately, the goal is to build a policy diffusion framework that, cognizant of embedded interests and political power dynamics, maximizes domestic legitimacy and creates greater opportunities for

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<sup>21</sup> This dissertation is, indeed, positioned in the policy learning thought but much more so from the institutionalist point of view. The general theories of policy design are determined by the generic understanding that the policy cycle has five stages: agenda setting; decision-making; policy formulation; policy implementation; and policy evaluation. In a democratic society, various players play various roles at every stage of the policy process. At the agenda setting stage, e.g., policy scholars like Miljan (2018) argue that influential subsystems can be categorized in three: the policy agenda, media agenda, and public agenda. All three compete in influencing the policy agenda. At this stage, it is important to think of how various theorists such as functionalists, positivists, or constructivist spin these stages of the policy process to arrive at their desired interpretations of institutional and policy designs. Similar competition occurs, though among different actors, at the policy implementation stage. In terms of implementation, there are key factors understood as general. Among the many factors political scholars agree on is that policy implementation is characterized by competing needs of policy-makers and their institutional bureaucrats. While politicians have immediate needs to appease electorates, bureaucrats have professional interests and, sometimes, partisan interests. So, functionalists, positivists (or rationalists), and constructivists are all very important views about policy design and about how the five stages of the policy process pan out. It is, indeed, crucial to read my dissertation with these competing theories in the background. This study takes only one view, i.e., the constructivist view and focuses on two of the five policy cycle stages, i.e., agenda setting and policy formulation and how ideational factors complicate these processes. The choice of these two stages is strategic because it is these two stages that ideational framing and persuasion is most critical.

successful transnational policy diffusion. In maximizing legitimacy, this approach is not adamant to retain context-specific ideas. The goal is to engage rather than defeat those local ideas to arrive at a symmetrical ideational position that defines a policy problem in new light. I claim that this approach best depicts Hall's (1993: 279) definition of a policy paradigm as "a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and kinds of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing."<sup>22</sup>

Problem definition is just as important in policy change as is the design of instruments meant to achieve set objectives. By comparing two different policy domains of disability and gender policies, I demonstrate that impactful policy change through diffusion involves not just the change of policy documents (such as new laws, signing treaties, or adopting policies) but the shift of ideas and perceptions among social actors that define the problem a particular set of instruments seeks to address.

### **3.1. Interrogating the Status Quo**

While many disability scholars and activists perceive the transnationalization of the disability discourse as an authentic and disinterested spreading of democracy and actualization of inherent rights, a few have expressed concern about it (e.g. Devlieger, 1999; Grech, 2011; Meekosha, 2011; Soldatic and Grech, 2014). These critical disability studies scholars have argued, for example, that despite accounting for over 80 percent of the global population of persons with

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<sup>22</sup> According to Hall (1993), paradigm shifts are synonymous with transformative policy changes. These shifts are relatively rare because they involve a reconfiguration of dominant policy actors' very goals. Such a reconfiguration leads to what Hall (1993) calls "third order change." First order change refers to altering the levels and settings of existing policy instruments, while second order change refers to replacing these instruments without reshuffling the main policy goals of collective and individual actors. Third order change is transformative in nature, while first and second order change are incremental (Hall, 1993).

disabilities, the global South remains at the periphery of “development policy, research and programs, and virtually excluded from the Western-centric disability studies” (Grech, 2011: 87). In addition, they argue that the ‘universalization’ of Western-founded disability paradigms has negative impacts, especially on the global South where experiences of disability are profoundly different.

Although these scholars have rightly questioned the legitimacy of homogenizing Western disability ideologies and practices in the Global South (e.g. Grech 2011), an assessment of how this ideological transnationalization impacts prospects for policy diffusion is lacking. Particularly, very scanty research that properly theorizes TNAs and policy diffusion exists in Africa. One of the reasons disability scholarship has not theorized TNAs and policy diffusion in Africa is that there is almost non-existent ideational institutionalist thinking among disability scholars. By ‘ideational institutionalist’, I do not mean mere appeal to the functions of political institutions. Rather, I mean the conceptualization of institutions as both formal and informal norms, rules, and practices as North (1994) defines them. Disability scholarship has not related with the idea that institutions and policies are more than just regulative but, like North (1994) and Scott (2005) argue, also cultural-cognitive and normative. Figure 3.1. below gives an illustrative model of an ideational institutionalist paradigm. In other words, policies and laws (understood as institutions), are simultaneously a representation of particular historic, social, epistemic, ideological, and ontological identities. Adanu (2017: 547) stresses this point when he argues that “informal institutions are [...] informed by historical experiences” and that “essentially these are habits, attitudes, or a common approach to evaluating and addressing the issues in a society that have evolved over time to become a culture.” Policies are both cognitive and normative. That being the case, policy change, particularly Hall’s third order change,

therefore, constitutes not merely the change of policy instruments, but as Hall (1993) suggests, the ideas that underline beliefs and goals of actors as well. I argue in this research that such actors are not just elected officials, but all actors in the political process, including the electorate.

The intersection of this ideational institutionalist thinking with disability transnational policy advocacy raises important questions that are unanswered by core disability scholarship. Like Adanu (2017) argues, many policies in Africa fail because they prescribe universalistic precepts incongruent to African policy environments. He argues that carefully considering the policy environment setting before changing the rules of the society and making policy choices is crucial. This argument and model are like Richard Rose's (1991) "lesson-drawing" model, where lessons are drawn simultaneously with the assessment of compatibility and "fit". Contrary to the homogenizing policies driven by many neoliberal institutions, Africa's policy terrain is influenced by its historical, ethnolinguistic and socio-political context, all of which form a policy environment different from any other. This is a growing academic realization in modern policy scholarship on Africa. The need for localization and normative fit-test is even more crucial where a given policy idea borders on entrenched ideational transformation.

This study builds on this conceptual thrust. I advance a constructivist argument for disability policy diffusion based on ideational arguments, and against a purely positivist political institutional approach. The study suggests that the political-institutional paradigm of the transnational disability discourse (although with some success) overlooks context-specific ideational factors by assuming universality of Western geopolitical ideologies, norms, and interests to southern Africa. Theoretically, this study is built on a constructivist paradigm that stresses the importance of ideas, social meanings, historical and cultural identities in disability policy design and implementation. Therefore, the study proposes an Afrocentric approach to

disability policy design in southern Africa, which is more responsive to the unique local ideational and experiential foundations.

I argue, first, that existing transnational disability policy diffusion efforts in southern Africa are failing to entrench largely because they are modeled on the neoliberal paradigm of hegemonic Western-centric ‘political institutional engagement’ over a balance with, if not prioritization, of the local ideational social contexts. It is these ideational social contexts that are the principal incubators of social meaning, identities and norms that most proximately and significantly spell out the experiential environments for persons with disabilities in southern Africa. Second, I argue that, due to the sociological significance of endogenous factors that shape the disability experience and understanding, successful disability policy diffusion in southern Africa needs to consider a more socially strategic approach that identifies key transformative policy agents rather than the existing predominantly Western-driven political-institutional approach. I argue that engaging sociological factors is more likely to yield successful policy diffusion at the level of Hall’s third order change, than mere change of documents (signing treaties, and promulgating policy positions) by political players likely for perverse political incentives.

**Table 3.1. Types of Ideas and Their Effects on Policy-Making**

	Concepts and Theories in the Foreground of the Debate	Underlying Assumptions in the Background of the Debate
Cognitive (Outcome oriented)	<i>Programs</i> Ideas as elite prescriptions that enable politicians, corporate leaders, and other decision makers to chart a clear and specific course of action	<i>Paradigms</i> Ideas as elite assumptions that constrain the cognitive range of useful programs available to politicians, corporate leaders, and other decision makers
Normative (Non-outcome oriented)	<i>Frames</i> Ideas as symbols and concepts that enable decision makers to legitimize programs to their constituents	<i>Public Sentiments</i> Ideas as public assumptions that constrain the normative range of legitimate programs available to decision makers

*Source: Campbell, 2004: 94.*

### **3.2. Ideas, Knowledge Control, and Political Power**

*“Some of the things we thought were obvious, universal, and intuitive may not have this character at all”, Richard Bernstein, 1983.*

This subsection seeks to create a conceptual stage for the introduction of an alternative theoretical paradigm. The rationale for examining the relationship between ideas, knowledge, and political power is to highlight how transnational policy diffusion is not an interest-neutral process and to show how this process can be used, purposefully or unconsciously, as a tool for political control and ideational dominance. However, while political institutions might sign treaties and agreements at the international level, their actions do not always correspond with domestic ideational realities. When political institutions acquiesce to transnational policy proposers, their acquiescence does not necessarily entail cultural or normative change for the rest

of society.<sup>23</sup> It is, therefore, important to properly theorize the transnational policy diffusion process to minimize sterile diffusion results and negative effects that could ultimately be counterproductive to policy learning prospects.

In other words, it matters how ideas from one setting influence people of different ideational settings. Several political science and ideational scholars have highlighted the relationship between ideas and interest (e.g. Béland, 2010; Poteete's, 2003; Walldorf, 2010) and how this could be a cause for power contestation. Hall, in his 1993 article also stresses the tension between “puzzling” and “powering,” which refer to learning processes and political struggles, respectively. For him, the study of policy change should encompass both dimensions because the singular focus on what he calls “social learning” could obscure the power dimension of paradigm shifts, “which feature political struggles among a wide array of actors, in contrast to the more technocratic, lower-profile learning processes leading to first and second order changes” (Béland et al., 2019 – upcoming). The analysis of policy diffusion and policy change, therefore, should pay close attention to asymmetrical power relations among social and political actors.<sup>24</sup> The understanding that policy ideas are at the same time manifestations of interests and could translate into power asymmetries spells out the need to avoid simplistic approaches to policy diffusion. Table 3.1. demonstrates how policies are always shrouded in cognitive and normative interests, some manifest, others in the background.

In her article entitled “Decolonizing disability: thinking and acting globally,” Meekosha (2011) raises the question about the neoliberal tendencies embedded in the transnational

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<sup>23</sup> What stands out about the ideational argument is that it rejects the notion that the five stages of the policy process operate outside the context of shared socio-cultural values that serve as impetus or constraints, or “foreground” and “background”. The problem of transnational policy diffusion through the political institutional model is fundamentally driven by the assumption that institutions are founded on the same Western-modeled philosophy and, therefore, operate the same way. The entire policy process takes place within specified socio-cultural and historical values and beliefs that enable and/or constrain policy ideas.

<sup>24</sup> On the ideational side of power see Carstensen, 2015; on power and public policy see Lemieux, 1995.

disability discourse. She, along with several others like Soldatic and Grech (2014) and Cleaver (2016), has questioned the ideological neutrality of West-centric disability ideas. She argues that they are characterized by colonial supremacy and cultural destruction and dislocation. As observed earlier, there is an argument advanced by political science realists and those focusing on hegemony that international policies and institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are primarily tools of the powerful in the global political economy (Waltz, 2000; Krasner, 1976) and that they serve to advance the interests of economically and militarily powerful states. Waltz (2000) confirms that power and interest override any institutional laws in the international system. Escobar (2011) views the work of institutions as one of developing, creating, and reinforcing power relations that they formalize in textual and documentary form. This argument is consistent with Foucault's (1982) conceptualization of institutions and power. According to Foucault (1982), any institutional analysis must begin from the standpoint of power. Power, to Foucault (1982: 792), is so inherently sociological that "a society without power relations can only be an abstraction". For Foucault, power is discourse and discourse is power.

Like other transnational subjects, the transnationalization of the disability discourse must undergo a test for ideational interest and power contestation. Based on Western ideals, 'universal' disability paradigms diffused by Western-centric scholarship and transnational actors likely have embedded Western-centric views of the world and values of interpersonal relations.

As Cleaver (2016: 5) claims in a doctoral thesis based on his research in western Zambia:

Far more common was the sentiment that my training, as a rehabilitation provider from Canada, *did not fit* the situations that I was facing in the global South. I felt that the incongruence of training and needs was often premised on the notion of *culture*, in that it seemed that my understandings of disability, society, health, and healing were discordant with the understandings of the clients. Another common source of incongruence was realization that my own clinical services could address but a minute fraction of the needs



that I was ostensibly striving to meet. Even after having considered the more dispersed approaches of *capacity building* through the training of additional professionals and raising funds for their subsequent employment, my contributions remained woefully inadequate in comparison to the needs, and dangerously dependent upon an ongoing engagement that I was not planning to maintain. From the start of my engagement in the global South, it was clear that rehabilitation *provided by* practitioners from the global North was not an optimal strategy to improve the situation of persons with disabilities in the global South. Over the course of my engagement, I came increasingly to think that rehabilitation *informed by* practitioners from the global North might also be sub-optimal for many scenarios in many contexts.

Cleaver's experience and observation, without stating it, stresses the point that policy diffusion should take seriously ideational heterogeneity and bend more towards ideational persuasion than conquest. As Meekosha (2011) and Grech (2011) note, even among academics, geopolitical intellectual supremacy is rife: mainstream disability scholars seldom reference disability scholars from the global South. While systemic attempts at universalizing disability knowledge and norms through international statutes and norms have successfully established unified transnational disability regimes, they also likely carry with them epistemic supremacy and hegemony that could trample on, rather than persuade, deep rooted local knowledge and "truths", whether they are correct or not. These "truths" are important for designing more locally responsive policies and for more successful diffusion efforts.

So, how else could transnational actors facilitate the building of a truly global disability discourse without imposing one geopolitical perspective over others? Before answering this question, and in the quest to consolidate the case for an Afrocentric disability policy design, I do two things. First, I discuss contemporary policy diffusion, the potential space for neo-liberal agenda pursuits. Second, I propose an alternative theoretical framework for transnational disability policy.

### **3.3. Ideological Universalism and its Problems**

The basic approach for any constructivist framework is, like Whyte and Ingstad (2007: 3) propose, “to start where people live, with their concerns and resources and the particular political ecology in which they are interacting. What is disabling for them there?”

Although this approach appears obvious and easy, it is elusive in many transnational policy diffusion operations. Starting with the immediate socio-economic and political factors characterizing the experience of persons with disability in a given society is important because persons with disabilities’ experiences (opportunities, limitation, threats, and hopes) are largely contingent on these broader socio-cultural, economic and political environment (Grech, 2009). For example, the popular claim in global documents such as the WHO’s World Report on Disability that persons with disability are disproportionately affected by poverty in Africa should be understood in the context of mass poverty in Africa and how family units struggle and share meagre resources among themselves, giving preferential treatment to the weak and sick, what western positivism would not acknowledge as a form of social protection and, with their “universal” approaches, would seek to supplant.

Conversely, negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities or the elderly could be borne of more complex non-material factors such as ancestry, religion, or social relations whose solutions cannot be found in isolation from lived experiences. Like Grech (2009: 777) argues, western evaluations of unemployment and poverty in the global South frequently emphasize the industrialist, welfarist and individualist views, bypassing

broader, context-specific issues, such as the role and influence of community and culture, the absence of welfare, dependence on natural resources, vulnerability to environmental stresses and shocks, chronic poverty, intra-household disadvantages, a rural–urban divide in formal services (e.g. health and education) and geographical dispersion, among others.

The industrialist, rights-focused, and political institution-focused approach to transnational policy is, therefore reductionist and problematic. Indeed, we cannot resolve all global problems by universalizing context-specific paradigms, and by ignoring the contestations inherent in ideas.

### **3.4. Bricolage, Translation, and Disability Policy Transfer**

To conceptualize an alternative disability policy diffusion approach that goes beyond the neoliberal political-institutional approach, I propose bridging three theoretical concepts – Parsons’ (2007) ideational explanations for political behavior as well as Campbell’s (2004) bricolage and translation. I also suggest three specific stages (socialization, rationalization, and institutionalization) which ideational policy diffusion should take. The new framework stresses the importance of ideational persuasion of normative ideas (see Figure 3.1.) to increase chances of success in cognitive programs. I argue that through these three steps, bricolage and translation are powerful tools for mediating transnational actors’ influence for successful policy change at the domestic level while minimizing the risk of resistance and of the feeling of dejection and conquest on the part of domestic actors (elected officials and the electorate).

Although I have already defined ideas in Chapter 1, it is important to put Parsons’ argument for ideas in proper context. Parsons (2007) couches a typology for explaining political behavior in the two logics: the logic of position (structural and institutional) and the logic of interpretation (psychological and ideational). The logic of position “explains by detailing the landscape around someone to show how an obstacle course of material or man-made constraints and incentives channels her to certain actions” (Parsons, 2007: 13). On the other hand, the logic of interpretation “explains by showing that someone arrives at an action only through one’s interpretation of what is possible and/or desirable” (Parsons, 2007: 13). According to Parsons,

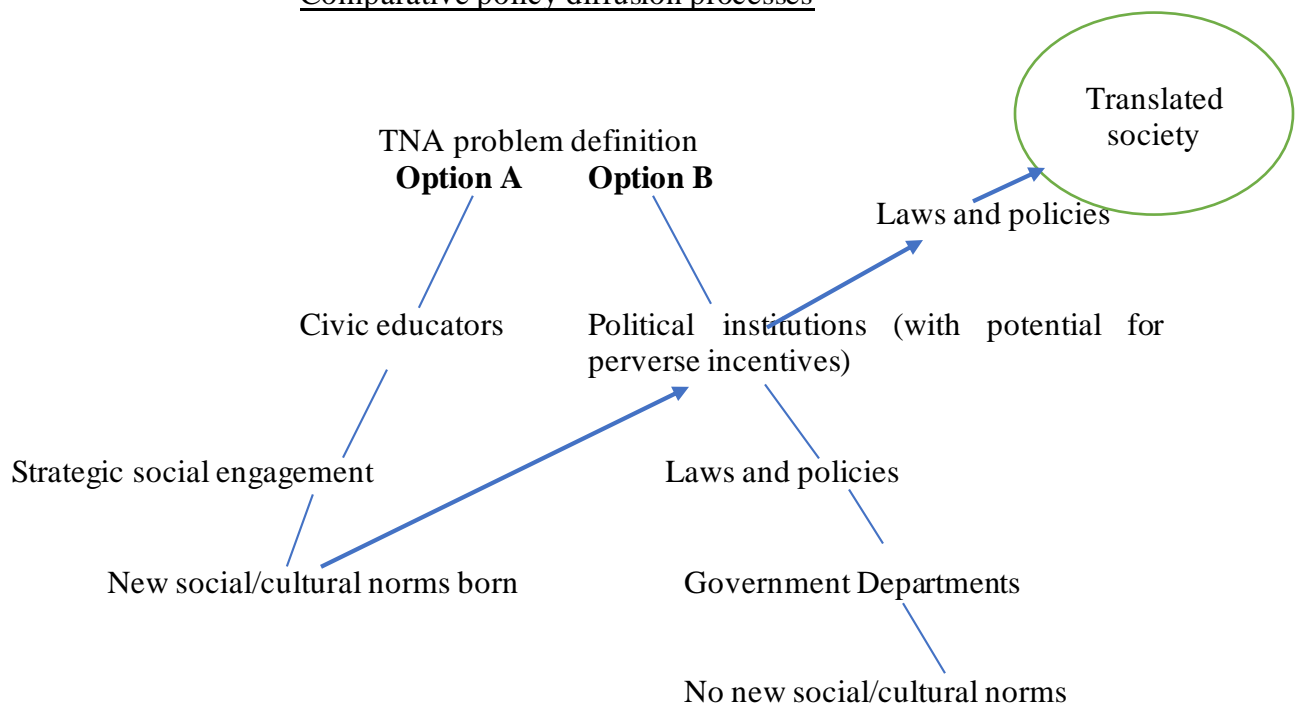
therefore, explanations of political behavior can be classified as one of four types contained in the two logics above: structural, institutional, psychological, and ideational. Under the logic of interpretation, the difference between ideational and psychological forces is stark: the former are historically constructed and the latter are about hard-wired cognitive processes. What I abstract from Parsons is the concept of ideational explanations. For Parsons (2002: 48), ideas are “claims about descriptions of the world, causal relationships, or the normative legitimacy of certain actions”. Ideas are constructive interpretative lenses through which actors make sense of their material, social and political environment.

Parsons argues that ideational claims are particularistic in that they rely on the consequences of prior contingent actions and trace the causes of action to some constellation of practices, norms, and ideas through which individuals interpret the world. However, as Parsons (2007: 97-98) notes, “people may invent a stunning range of beliefs and practices, but they do not quite do so in infinitely flexible ways.” Ideational foundations, though amenable to alternative persuasion through framing, serve as stable sociological and ontological identities. As Trebilcock (2014: 39) argues, since societies’ ideational positions are relatively static, they “serve as an important foundation to which policy proposals must generally be tied, in one form or another, in order to gain popular acceptance.” The fact that these beliefs are to some extent flexible makes it important to consider translating policy proposals for local appeal to a sense of normative fairness and appropriateness (see Trebilcock, 2014). It is this need for framing in policy diffusion that necessitates the next part of this alternative framework.

As suggested, above, in addition to ideational explanations, the second and third concepts that constitute my alternative theoretical framework are derived from Campbell (2004). In his analysis of how various ideas can shape institutional change, Campbell (2004) discusses

translation and bricolage, two mechanisms according to which different ideas and institutional elements are combined and reframed in particular institutional contexts. Table 3.1. summarizes Campbell's theory and it illustrates the ideational formation of every society and how various ideas impact the policy prospects. On one hand, Campbell argues that when new ideas are introduced in a new cultural and institutional context through diffusion processes, these ideas are typically translated into local practice in varying degrees. From this perspective, translation is about adapting foreign ideas to a particular normative or institutional setting so that they can blend in (Clarke et al., 2015). Bricolage, on the other hand, is about combining different pre-existing ideas and institutional components to create something new. In other words, bricolage relates to the capacity of actors to create something new out of the ideational and institutional legacies that already exist in their environment (Carstensen, 2011).

**Figure 3.1. Ideational negotiation Vs Reductionist political institutional policy diffusion**  
Comparative policy diffusion processes



Notes: **Option A:** Bricolage and Translation (through socialization, rationalization, and institutionalization); **Option B:** Political Institutional Approach

Bricolage and translation in disability policy diffusion in southern Africa are necessary to enhance policy diffusion. Empirically, because of its unique historical, cultural, economic, religious, and political experiences that collectively shape the disability experience in a unique way, the southern African social context does not render itself adequately amenable to the Western-centric legislative approach without addressing preliminary contextual factors. As illustrated, existing models of concentrating on legislative procedures and targeting political institutions for envisioned transformation have proved futile and even offensive, demanding alternative methodologies. Theoretically, social norms, understood as informal institutions, cannot change overnight through prescription of legislation. Unfortunately, as Grech (2011: 93) argues, southern Africa as other parts of the global South, has since colonial times been ‘construed as a blank slate, waiting for outside intervention’. Social norms, likeable or not, constitute identities and meanings that cannot be supplanted through legislation alone. As Scott (2005) argues, cultural cognition is an essential component of institutional design and meaning.

To begin to make disability policy pathways that crack deep into southern African societies’ sociological, cultural, historical, and philosophical foundations, translation and bricolage of ideas offers a more viable and tenacious promise as a mechanism for cultural and ideological change and transformation. This change, through bricolage and translation, operates not through political institutions but primarily through civic bricoleurs at the societal level. While political institutions are often pliable to political and economic manipulation by the politically and economically powerful wielding political authority, they are socially ill-positioned to drive such bottom-up ideational innovation. For example, they can legislate gender-based domestic violence, but they cannot overhaul embedded cultural frames and public

sentiments that define gender relations; they can legislate the age of sexual consent to curb child marriages, but they cannot obliterate deep-seated cultural norms of social cohesiveness that support such practices. Figure 3.1. above illustrates the difference between the two diffusion approaches. In the words of Miljan (2012:5), “a program, law, or regulation hardly ever ‘solves’ a problem in the sense of eliminating the conditions that inspired demands for action. When a problem does disappear, the reason often has less to do with government action than with changing societal conditions – including the emergence of new problems that push old ones below the surface of public consciousness”.

Without an ideational mend, therefore, law enforcement is powerless. In southern Africa, political actors, often perceived as elitist, are ineffective in engendering changes in norms related to cultural and religious identities. In their place, I see civic educators as translators and bricoleurs (i.e. ideational entrepreneurs): traditional leaders, religious leaders, teachers, issue-based advocates, journalists and other social entrepreneurs. It is among communities, families, and social groups and associations that disability frames are constituted and sustained. In her argument about when a subject ripens for public attention, Miljan (2012) demonstrates how, in the industrialized democracies, change of cultural attitudes preceded the political agenda to address unequal social conditions of males and females, e.g., equal pay for equal work. It was, therefore, cultural change, not legislation per se, that necessitated the revolution for gender equality. Subsequent legislative efforts supported the ideational transformation that was a result of a policy discourse.

Civic educators, particularly in the southern African context, are strategically positioned to reinforce or alter social beliefs, challenge epistemological positions, and to help re-align norms, values, and “truths”. Simply put, they are strategically positioned to act as policy

discourse entrepreneurs for ideational transformation. For example, transnational and domestic organizations that work to reverse trends of child marriage and domestic violence against women in many African countries have realized, after decades of working through Western-centric<sup>25</sup> legislative avenues with little success, that working through community players such as chiefs and heads of religious organizations incorporating endogenous norms, values, and ideas, is more impactful in reversing these trends.

This proposed framework underscores the centrality of strategic choice of civic educators. In countries like Malawi, Zambia, Botswana and Ghana, traditional ethnic leaders and religious leaders wield significant ideational sway over communities, and their teachings are ‘reverently’ adhered to. They are better placed, socially, to facilitate disability ideational bricolage and translation than political institutions. In fact, Zambia, like Malawi, runs on a dual-legal system: one statutory, the other customary (Women and Law in Southern Africa, Interview, May 2018). While the former is codified and trackable for TNA support and/or change, the latter is ideational and intersubjective, carried through customs, norms, identities, beliefs and culture. It means, therefore, that Zambians and Malawians are influenced not only by state-centric precepts, but also by ideational factors that define their identities. It is important, therefore, that

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<sup>25</sup> I would argue that policy learning in Western countries and in Africa has a lot of similarities but also important differences. What determines the differences are political and socio-cultural/or ideational variations. For example, electoral management systems have proliferated almost seamlessly across both Western and African countries. Democratic elections as we know them today are products of Western democratic development. This example is, of course simplistic. Why? Because in the context of democratization, many African societies practiced leadership choices in some form or another although that choice was not universally accessible. Many political scientists have argued that the entrenchment of certain democratic practices in Africa could be attributed to pre-existing practices of leadership that facilitated domestication of similar practices. I think this is that what Richard Rose (1991) means by social learning. There are, however, new policy ideas that have moved from West-to-South (Africa) quite seamlessly, e.g., in healthcare research and service provision, or IT or labor unionization. But there are certainly some policy areas that require more thought, particularly those with entrenched socio-cultural identities. These are matters bordering on entrenched world views. For example, many African societies have centuries-old entrenched customs about gender relations, or parent-child relations that, even with strong westernization of lifestyle, have remained deeply rooted. Policy learning in such areas is very different.



transnational disability policy actors understand these geo-socio-political dynamics and invest their resources where they would have the most impact.

A potential entry point for championing disability epistemic and policy influence in southern Africa societies is an appeal to the pre-existing communitarian sense of solidarity, family care, and social cohesion. Grech (2011) acknowledges the importance of family ties in offering solidarity and support to people with disabilities in the global South. In their research on social policy, Pruce and Hickey (2017) found that solidarity principles, built on the strong tradition of family and social care and support for members at the local level, were the main support for Zambia's welfare system. Communal solidarity, which is a strong characteristic of many southern African societies, is a profound opportunity for disability social policy development in the region.

At the advent of HIV/AIDS in the 1990s, southern African communities, among the worst affected globally, appealed to communitarian values, adopting home-based care for those with HIV/AIDS rather than institutionalized hospices. Today, global organizations combating HIV/AIDS such as the United States' President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS have acknowledged the profundity of home-based care as a niche not just for care, but also for combating social stigma and discriminatory practices preventing individuals from voluntarily seeking HIV testing and treatment. Most HIV/AIDS programs now place home-based care at the core and policy organizations and activists attribute much of the success in reducing the pandemic through increased education about risky behavior, reduced stigma, and improved care, to the home-based care structure. Therefore, family and communal solidarity could be an important conceptual niche for championing ideational

enhancement or reform, fighting disability stigma, and for implementing successful disability programs.

### **3.5. Mechanisms for Translational Policy diffusion**

Finally, I conceptualize a practical process through which bricolage and translation occurs. I suggest three mutually reinforcing processes that lead to acceptance of new ideas as contextually normal and local. I argue that these three steps lead not just to the tinkering of policy instruments or political lip-service, but to addressing the very foundations of the policy problems a set of policy ideas seeks to address. Since all three processes presuppose the need for agency and for ideational framing (in Chapter 7, I will argue that policy transfer, through these three steps, takes into account the demand and supply rules). They all, individually and collectively, stress the inadequacy of the regimented political institutional model.

#### ***3.5.1. Socialization***

Socialization is a deliberate effort to introduce new ideas, desirable and otherwise, to a new social setting so that they become permissible if not desirable (Ashforth and Anand, 2003). Socialization helps us to understand how otherwise dislikeable norms, practices, and values in one setting are considered normal in another. Through socialization, both new ideas become imbedded into a pre-existing social environment and new members of a community are introduced to existing social norms.

### ***3.5.2. Rationalization***

Rationalization is the process of valorizing a given norm or practice, regardless of what other societies think about it. For example, among the Maasai people of East Africa, female genital mutilation is not only socialized but rationalized for its social, cultural, and perhaps super-natural reasons. The same is true about same-sex relationships in the global North. Rationalized norms and practices stick and are hard to change. Bruenig (2006: 133) argues that real policy paradigmatic change constitutes the change in the “parallel model of beliefs, truths or worldviews” held by a society or policy group. Political institutional responses alone cannot reverse or undo such entrenched beliefs, truths, and worldviews. Where political institutional measures are stressed over alternative socialization and rationalization initiatives, the consequences are resistance, underground syndicates, and outright defiance, all of which are counterproductive to cohesive policy diffusion. Both socialization and rationalization are crucial prerequisites for ideational and policy legitimacy.

### ***3.5.3. Institutionalization***

Rather than be the first step in policy diffusion, institutionalization is the last stage in my model. At this stage, an idea, having been sufficiently socialized and rationalized, is embedded in systems and statutes for reference’s purposes. It is at this point that ideas are codified into institutional precepts. Where institutionalization of an idea precedes the first two stages, compliance is not guaranteed, and indifference, if not defiance, is the expected result. As I will demonstrate, the women movements in parts of southern Africa suffered such a backlash when they attempted to reverse adverse societal practices about gender relations through the Western-

centric legislative way before resolving entrenched social norms that socialized and rationalized the practices.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

The alternative framework presented in this chapter underscores one point with multiple critical building blocks: that policy change through ideational diffusion demands much more than political institutional reforms that may well lead to the change of policy instruments without addressing the core tenets of a policy paradigm. The building blocks are, first, that policies, like other institutional frameworks, are formulated in ideational contexts addressing problems specific to a set of ideals, beliefs, and worldviews. This point entails that societies identify with sets of ideational factors that constitute ontological identities distinct from others. As earlier stated, and as Hall (1993) instructs us, a policy paradigm involves, in addition to defining solutions, understanding the problems those solutions seek to solve. Understanding problems, therefore, means understanding the specific context within which the problem arises and how that environment self-understands and interprets its problems. Despite their entrenched nature, context-specific beliefs are neither permanent nor inflexible. They are amenable to periodic alterations, depending on many factors, among them, the need for social and cultural learning. It means, and therefore the second point, that ideational persuasion or framing plays an important part in policy interaction and, particularly, in transnational policy diffusion. The need for framing demands identification of strategic ideational entrepreneurs. Like Gomez and Vossenberg (2017: 41) point out, “agents are communicative; they spin and frame discourse in a particular way to attain a desirable result”.

The third building block comes from the justification for ideational persuasion in policy diffusion. The justification for policy translation and negotiation is born out of the understanding that policies, as representations of ideational ontologies, could signify power relations. In the absence of careful ideational framing and translation, policy diffusion could result into serious epistemic or political power asymmetries detrimental to successful and meaningful policy diffusion. Policy translation produces ideational equilibrium and legitimacy. Where diffusion occurs due to power asymmetries, issues of deception, legitimacy and fairness arise. In such situations, sustainability is not guaranteed, and social learning is unlikely. In fact, power asymmetries in policy transfer could result not only into ideational impositions, but also into complex principal-agent dilemmas where one acquiesces for perverse incentives such as monetary and economic gains.

There are several examples to illustrate the preceding point. For example, in the 1990s, many SSA countries underwent International Monetary Fund-driven structural adjustment programs (SAP) that led to widespread privatization of key state-run industries that employed large parts of local populations. The SAP, as envisioned by SSA governments and human rights advocates that had resisted the International Monetary Fund policy packages, resulted in mass unemployment, collapse of social safety nets such as health and education services dependent on parastatals (for the case of Zambia, see AFRODAD, 2003<sup>26</sup>). This policy redirection, widely perceived as imposition across several SSA, was driven both by economic power asymmetries and the desperate need for financial bailouts by SSA countries. A more recent example is that of Uganda given in Chapter 1 regarding that country's short-lived 2015 anti-LGBTI law.

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<sup>26</sup> AFRODAD PRSP Series 2003:  
[https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/1692/AFRODAD-  
%20238206.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/1692/AFRODAD-%20238206.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

Threatened with economic and political sanctions that would have dire consequences on its population, Uganda quickly withdrew the anti-LGBTI law through its courts. Uganda does not have the same political/economic capability to stave off policy influence from the U.S. or Britain as Singapore or South Korea have. Southern African countries, therefore, are unlikely to refuse (at least not without credible consequences) UN-driven agendas that have the backing of the U.S., Britain or France as their main political and economic benefactors. Interest is, therefore, a fundamental analytical point in transnational policy diffusion.

## **CHAPTER 4: METHOD AND METHODOLOGY**

### **4.0. Introduction**

The goal of this chapter is to meet five objectives. First, it offers a rationale for the choice of the comparative case study methods and for a qualitative analytical methodology. Second, the chapter justifies the decision to focus on Malawi and Zambia as the cases representing the southern African population of cases. For coherence's sake, I place the country-contexts immediately after these justifications. Otherwise, I could have addressed country-contexts much later in the study, in Chapters 6 and 7. Third, the chapter outlines the study's principal objectives after which it gives insights to some of the limitations in the data collection and analyses exercises. Fourth, the chapter outlines the research design, under which, I give a systematic explanation of the data collection procedures. I explain how I approached recruitment, sampling, and interviewing. Finally, the chapter outlines the limitations and the ethical parameters under which the interviews were conducted. Here, I also provide some reflections on reflexivity to provide a contextual position of my research interests and how they, in addition to scientific rigor, intersect with the way I approach this study.

### **4.1. Why a Comparative, Case Study, Approach?**

The decision about the method of data collection for this study was primarily informed by the nature of the subject of inquiry. Yin (1981, 2003) identifies the unique times when the case study methods are the best as: (a) when the focus of the study specifically answers to a "how" and "why" question; (b) when the researcher cannot manipulate the behavior of his research subject; (c) when the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions because the researcher believes they are relevant to understanding the phenomenon, and (d) when the boundaries between the object of study and the context are blurred. The choice of the methods for this study was

informed primarily by points (a) and (c). The nature of this inquiry is the pursuit of the depth rather than breadth of the qualitative conditions that account for variation in TNA performance across policy domains. For an ideationally-oriented study like this one, the researcher should not be limited to experimental methodologies but should, in addition to interview responses and other qualitative research techniques, use their own intuitions about what they observe and about the unspoken symbols, attitudes, mannerisms, and other outward manifestations of the research environment and its inhabitants (Yin, 1981). None of this could be captured in a survey questionnaire or interview sessions alone. Further, for a topic so socially embedded, conducting interviews while inserted into the context of interviewees allows the researcher to have a unique depth of analysis compared to simply carrying out a survey (Dilley, 2000; Van Evera, 1997).

This study focuses on southern Africa with Malawi and Zambia as its cases. Although case study and comparative methods are two distinct research approaches, this study combines comparative analysis techniques in its core case study method. The comparative method is the analysis of a small number of cases “entailing at least two observations, yet too few to permit the application of conventional statistical analysis” (Finifter, 1993: 106). Despite its challenge of addressing more variables than cases, comparative analysis is seen among political scientists as a strong basis for evaluating hypotheses (Finifter, 1993). Comparative analysis serves as a tool for developing classifications of social phenomena and for establishing whether shared phenomena can be explained by the same causes (Finifter, 1993). For purposes of this study, comparative analysis provides an analytical framework for examining (and explaining) social and cultural differences and specificity across Malawi and Zambia.



## 4.2. Case Selection

This study focuses on Malawi and Zambia as approximate representative samples of the southern African socio-political and economic diversity. The purpose of this subsection is to provide systematic selection criteria for the two cases and, subsequently, to provide an elaborate individual country context for each of the cases.

Indeed, no random or purposeful selection of cases would sufficiently represent the demographic and ideational diversity found among southern African countries. However, informed by several factors, the choice of these two is intended to closely approximate that variation. To start, I considered exclusion and inclusion criteria to determine the potential two cases in the region. By southern Africa, I do not mean the official Southern African Development Community (SADC) because SADC is not constituted purely by geographically southern African countries. For example, although Tanzania is a member of SADC, it geographically falls under East Africa. To be precise, I considered South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Botswana, and Zambia. Although South Africa could have been a potential case, I decided not to use it because it is over-studied, which would make it harder to generate novel data. Unlike other southern African countries, a lot has been written on South Africa's disability-related social programs (Watermeyer, 2006); on children and intellectual disability (Christianson et al., 2002; Molteno, Molteno, Finchilescu, & Dawes, 2001); and on disability and its intersectionality with poverty and HIV (Loeb et al., & Maart, 2008; Nattrass, 2006). Similarly, Botswana's socio-economic identity is almost indistinguishable from South Africa's with the Tswana people spread between the two countries.<sup>27</sup> There are about one million Tswanas living in Botswana, constituting about 50 percent of the population and

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<sup>27</sup> South African History Online: Accessed 8/12/2018, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/tswana>.

over four million living in South Africa.<sup>28</sup> A potential alternative would have been Zimbabwe. However, the political instability in Zimbabwe following a military coup in November 2017 created an uncertain situation that could complicate research on the ground.<sup>29</sup> As explained below, the other countries were eliminated on linguistic basis.

Still, why Malawi and Zambia? Although I discuss the individual country contexts of Malawi and Zambia in detail in subsection 4.3., it is still important here to explain the comparative value of the two countries. First, the two share important similarities that could have analytical significance. Both countries share a colonial legacy with the British, receiving independence in 1964 just four months apart. As a result, Malawi and Zambia share close social and political ties and their political systems mimic the Westminster model of government. Second, connected to their colonial legacies, the two countries share a geographical border arbitrarily imposed by the British. Although Zambia is more ethnically heterogeneous, ethnic populations along the border spill over into either country and share certain ideational elements.

The two cases also have important differences between them. While Zambia is largely a mining-driven economy with a significantly higher level of urbanization and economic activity,<sup>30</sup> Malawi is predominantly agrarian, and largely a rural country with lower economic activity.<sup>31</sup> Burdened by foreign debt to multilateral and bilateral lenders since the 1970s, both countries went through the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), leading up to debt cancellation in 2006 for Malawi and 2005 for Zambia. I discuss their individualized economic profiles in the subsequent subsections. Suffice here to note that economic profiles are important

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> “Zimbabwe is Under Military Control after Army Seizes Power from Mugabe”, CNN, November 15, 2017 Accessed 11/20/2017 <https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/14/africa/zimbabwe-military-chief-treasonable-conduct/index.html>

<sup>30</sup> With a GDP of US\$25 billion.

<sup>31</sup> With a lower GDP of about US\$6.3 billion.

for determining a country's resilience in the face of exogenous ideational and TNA policy pressure because they impact on ideational dispositions of populations.

A further justification for selecting the two cases was geographic and linguistic accessibility. Although they each have different ethnic groups and local languages, both countries use English as their official language. When interviewees (especially disabled people's organization leaders) were unable to adequately express themselves in English, I explained my questions in a local language popular enough in the individual country (i.e., Chi Nyanja, Tonga, or Bemba for Zambia, and Chewa for Malawi). Language is a key factor in in-depth ideational policy investigation, especially for capturing symbols, adages, stories, etc. For the same reason, the option for a non-English speaking country, such as Portuguese-speaking Angola or Mozambique, was ruled out.

### **4.3. Socio-economic and Political Country Contexts**

#### ***4.3.1. Malawi***

Malawi is a landlocked country in south-east Africa. With a population of 19.16 million and a land area of 119,000 square kilometers (of which 24,000 square kilometers is water) (UN 2018 estimates), Malawi is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. According to the UN, Malawi's Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.418, ranking 170 out of 187 countries (UNDP 2013 HDI) globally. Malawi's life expectancy stands at 63.9 years, up from 62.8 in 2016 (World Bank, 2018 Report)<sup>32</sup>, with its population considered highly susceptible to poor nutrition, HIV/AIDS, and other preventable diseases. Poverty and inequality, primarily driven by poor performance of the agriculture sector, unstable economic growth, rapid population growth and

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malawi/overview>.

lack of economic diversification beyond agriculture, remain very high in Malawi (World Bank, 2018). According to the World Bank, Malawi's total fertility rate dropped to 4.4 children per woman in 2017 from an average of 6.7 between 1992 and 2015/16. According to the World Bank, literacy levels (for people 15 years of age and above) stand at 81 percent for men and 66 percent for women.

Malawi's economy has a domestic growth product (GDP) of US\$6.3 billion.<sup>33</sup> Agriculture is its largest economic activity, contributing 29 percent of GDP and 90 percent of export revenue (UN, 2012 Report; CIA World Factbook, 2018<sup>34</sup>). The economy also heavily relies on substantial inflows of economic assistance from the multilateral institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, and bilateral donor nations. In 2006, Malawi received international debt relief under the HIPC program (CIA Factbook, 2018). In December 2007, the United States granted Malawi eligibility status to receive financial support within the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) initiative.

The country faces many challenges including a struggling market economy, poor economic diversification, underdeveloped educational facilities, facing up to environmental problems, addressing the rapidly growing problem of HIV/AIDS, and endemic institutionalized corruption, what Acemoglu and Robinson (2013) call 'extractive leadership'. Observers note that corruption levels are high in Malawi, with Transparency International ranking the country at 120 out of 175 economies in 2017 (World Bank, 2018).

Politically, Malawi is a young multiparty democracy, with its democracy falling under what Lynch and Crawford (2011: 275) call "hybrid democracy". After its independence from the British in 1964, Malawi suffered a period of autocratic rule under Hastings Kamuzu Banda,

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<sup>33</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com/malawi/gdp>.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mi.html>.

leader of the Malawi Congress Party, until 1994 when the country introduced multiparty elections. Banda's one-party rule was rejected by Malawians during a 1993 referendum. When he defeated Banda in the first ever multiparty elections in the country in 1994, the new president Bakili Muluzi, the leader of the United Democratic Front, freed all political prisoners, re-introducing civil and political liberties suppressed under Banda (Mapanje, 2002). One could reasonably argue that the country is still struggling from its legacy of three decades of autocratic rule, institutional subjugation, and rights denial.

Malawi is a signatory to the United Nations' CRPD which it has domesticated in the Disability Act of Malawi.<sup>35</sup> The Disability Act of Malawi was adopted in 2012, repealing its precursor, the 1971 Handicapped Persons Act. While the Handicapped Persons Act of 1971 was modeled on the medical understanding of disability, the Disability Act of 2012 adheres to the new global disability discourse of the social model. The Disability Act, among others, provides for the general adoption of policies and legislation for the achievement of rights of persons with disabilities. The Act establishes the Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA) which is charged with the responsibility to promote the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. The act sets MACODA as the chief advisory organ to the minister in charge of social services on all matters affecting persons with disabilities. In addition, it registers persons with disabilities and regulates DPOs and other relevant organizations.

Malawi also has additional pieces of legislation that support the functioning of representative organizations of persons with disabilities. Among them are the Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVETA) Act, 1999; the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, 2010 which provides for the registration of children with disabilities

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.adry.up.ac.za/index.php/2014-2-section-b-country-reports/malawi>.

at local government level, and the NGO Act of 2000 which regulates the functioning of NGOs in the country. The Local Government Act of 2010 also provides for the inclusion of a representative of persons with disabilities in the local councils as a non-elected councillor. However, the inclusion of such a representative is at the discretion of the local council. Furthermore, Malawi has a National Policy for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities adopted in 2006. Malawi also has numerous DPOs and disability activists spread across its urban areas but concentrated in Blantyre and Lilongwe, the two largest cities. Appendices A and B below detail Malawi's disability and gender legislation and policies, respectively.

Despite this plethora of legislation, policies, and spread of DPOs, people with disabilities are significantly marginalized in Malawi. All DPOs and activists who took part in this study observed that public education, health, transportation, and infrastructure are visibly non-responsive to persons with disabilities. DPOs in Malawi noted that the government did not show serious commitment to financing programs that would improve the welfare of persons with disabilities. In their cross-cultural and cross-national book, *Disability and poverty: "A global challenge"*, Eide and Ingstad (2011) show how African governments, among them Malawi, pay negligible attention to populations of persons with disabilities and how, despite the challenge of poverty and destitution, persons with disabilities remain resilient. In other words, Malawi is a typical case of a southern African country whose legislative systems and policies are in tandem with transnational norms and standards for disability welfare, but its reality presents a contrary picture.

A key factor to note about the Malawian demographics is its rural spread. With over 80 percent of its population living in the rural areas, Malawi presents an important case for a

country with entrenched cultural and ideological beliefs, norms, and values that could influence a people's worldviews in a particular way. For example, several studies have shown how cultural beliefs, norms, and values have posed significant challenges to improving HIV/AIDS services (Muula and Mfutso-Bengo, 2004), antenatal services (Roberts et al, 2016), and male circumcision (Ngalande, 2006). In their 2015 study on the influence of cultural perceptions of healthcare providers towards persons with disability, Braathen et al (2015) found that negative conceptualizations about disability among health service providers (e.g. medical doctors and nurses) affected service provision toward persons with disability. Similarly, Roberts et al. (2016), studying the influence of cultural beliefs on antenatal care found that cultural beliefs played an integral role in the decision-making process for antenatal care. It is important, therefore, to highlight that Malawi's demographic spread, particularly its rural setup, strongly forms its people's world views even when they assume Western-centric education and professional positions. Ideational formation is, therefore, of paramount analytical value in understanding disability conceptualization, experience, and its bearing on policy legitimacy and commitment.

#### **4.3.2. Zambia**

Zambia, a landlocked country like Malawi, is situated in central southern Africa. According to the UN population estimates, Zambia's population stands at 17.6 million<sup>36</sup>, two million less than Malawi's although more than six times the size of Malawi in landmass. At independence from British colonial rule in 1964, Zambia was surrounded by minority white regimes in Angola, Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia; it had a trouble-ridden Congo to the north and Apartheid South Africa in the south (Africa Indaba, 2010). To the west of Zambia was the Portuguese

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/zambia-population/>.

colony of Angola, which had three nationalist movements fighting Portuguese forces for independence.<sup>37</sup> All three of the movements conducted their early operations from Zambia, leading Portuguese forces to conduct devastating cross-border raids into Zambia (Africa Indaba, 2010).<sup>38</sup>

Historically, therefore, Zambia has played a key role in the political independence of its neighbors. Since the mid-1960s, Zambia has continued to host large numbers of refugees from its neighboring countries and other regional countries facing civil and political unrest, mostly from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and Angola. In February 2018, the United Nations' High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that Zambia hosted more than 72,151 African refugees.

Compared to Malawi, where less than 20 percent of the population live in urban areas, over 41 percent of the Zambian population is urbanized.<sup>39</sup> In colonial times, Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia), Malawi (then Nyasaland), and Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) constituted the British Central African Federation (CAF), each territory performing a distinct economic role. Southern Rhodesia was the federation's political, administrative, and economic center. As a result, the British invested heavily in the region's economic and public infrastructure. Similarly, the British, interested in the territory's abundant mineral resources, invested relatively well in Northern Rhodesia's public infrastructure. On the contrary, the British did not find much economic significance in Nyasaland. The gaping variations in demographic spread of British presence (see Table 4.1.) in the three territories is illustrative of their

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<sup>37</sup> Jose Eduardo dos Santos' Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA); Jonas Savimbi's União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA); and Holden Roberto's Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA).

<sup>38</sup> <https://matsheumhlope.wordpress.com/2010/05/14/zambias-support-for-liberation-movements-1964-1979/trackback/> - Accessed 7/31/2018.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/zambia-population/>.



investment and explorative priorities among the three territories. Due to this skewed settler focus on infrastructural development, the Malawian population remained overwhelmingly agrarian and rural for decades. Malawi, therefore, owes its low levels of urbanization largely to its colonial legacy.

Economically, Zambia depends on an undiversified mining economy, making it very susceptible to fluctuations of commodity prices on the international market. At independence, Zambia was almost entirely run by whites and foreign businesses (Roberts, 1976). At this time, it was dependent on the Benguela Railway, which ran from the Copperbelt region of central Zambia westwards through Angola to the port of Lobito on the Atlantic Ocean. Severally, the Angolan government manipulated Zambia's reliance on the Benguela Railway to punish it for supporting Angolan liberation movements (Moorcraft, 1990). During this difficult period, "Zambia's only ally in the region was Tanzania and its president Julius Nyerere; he too was committed to supporting liberation movements but had the luxury of a long coastline and a more robust and varied economy than Zambia" (Africa Indaba, 2010). In 2017, Zambia's GDP stood at US\$ 25 billion.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com/zambia/gdp>.

**Table 4.1. Numbers of white and black inhabitants before and during the CAF**

Year	Southern Rhodesia		Northern Rhodesia		Nyasaland		Total	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
<b>1927</b>	38,200 (3.98%)	922,000 (96.02%)	4,000 (0.4%)	1,000,000 (99.6%)	1,700 (0.13%)	1,350,000 (99.87%)	43,900 (1.32%)	3,272,000 (98.68%)
<b>1946</b>	80,500 (4.79%)	1,600,000 (95.21%)	21,919 (1.32%)	1,634,980 (97.68%)	2,300 (0.10%)	2,340,000 (99.90%)	104,719 (1.84%)	5,574,980 (98.16%)
<b>1955</b>	125,000 (4.95%)	2,400,000 (95.05%)	65,000 (3.02%)	2,085,000 (96.98%)	6,300 (0.25%)	2,550,000 (99.75%)	196,300 (2.71%)	7,035,000 (97.28%)
<b>1960</b>	223,000 (7.30%)	2,830,000 (92.70%)	76,000 (3.14%)	2,340,000 (96.85%)	9,300 (0.33%)	2,810,000 (99.66%)	308,300 (3.72%)	7,980,000 (96.28%)

1. Source: Wills, 1967.

2. Note: The CAF lasted from 1953 to 1963.

Although the country is quite urbanized, its people identify with the 73 ethnic groups and cultures. Zambia is deeply socialized into its cultural heritages passed on through ordinary discourse, various traditional beliefs, customs, and practices. For instance, conceptualizations of gender relations are typically characterized by patriarchal dominance. Norms and cultural values are socially imbued in family life, informal education, local literature, and marriage lessons. Zambians identify with their rural chiefdoms on their national registration cards and pride themselves with ethnic identities. National and party politics are significantly characterized by ethnic affiliations. As is evident from the research participants in this study, both from gender activists and from DPOs, culture constitutes a very significant component in public education and sensitization on both gender and disability matters. In fact, Zambia, like Malawi, runs on a dual-legal system: the statutory and the customary legal systems. While the former is codified and trackable for TNA support and/or change, the latter is ideational and intersubjective, carried through customs, norms, identities, beliefs, and culture. Both systems have individual level court

systems and different, sometimes conflicting values, premises for justice and interpretation of right. It means, therefore, that Zambians and Malawians, like other Africans, are influenced not only by institutionalized state-centric precepts, but also by ideational factors that define their identities.

Politically, Zambia is one of the most stable democracies in the region. Although the country slid into one party autocratic rule under Kenneth Kaunda in 1972, multi-party democracy returned in 1991 (Phiri, 2006). That year, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) under Frederick Chiluba defeated Kaunda's United National Independence Development (UNIP) that had ruled since independence. Zambia has seen several successful transitions of power since independence with opposition political parties defeating incumbents twice.

Of its 17.6 million people, the Central Statistical Office's 2010 census data estimates that 2 percent of the national population has disabilities of some sort while the National Policy on Disability estimates the prevalence of disability in the country to be between 10 and 20 percent (JCTR, 2017). Zambia is a state party to the United Nations' CRPD, having signed and ratified it in May 2006.<sup>41</sup> It domesticated the United Nations' CRPD through its Persons with Disabilities Act of 2012, updating a pre-existing statute of 1996. The National Policy on Disability gives guidelines on government's management of disability in the country. In addition, Zambia also has the Mental Disorders Act of 1949, which deals with matters of intellectual disability and predominantly focuses on disabled persons' custody or confinement and the administration of their estate, as they are considered as lacking legal capacity to manage their affairs. The Act treats mental disability in an outdated straitjacket manner and, until 2017 when the High Court outlawed Section 5 of the Act, used derogatory terms that had the effect of heightening

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<sup>41</sup> [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-15&chapter=4&clang=\\_en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-15&chapter=4&clang=_en).

stereotypes about disability and feed into misconceptions and stigma (Disability Rights Watch, 2018: interview data). It gratuitously used terms such as “mentally disordered,” “defective person,” “an idiot,” “an imbecile,” “feeble-minded,” and “a moral imbecile” in referring to persons with mental disabilities.<sup>42</sup>

Despite its domestication of the CRPD on paper, and the existence of over 120 DPOs, Zambia has not made meaningful material commitments towards its citizens with disabilities. Discrimination is systematic; public service provisions are overtly unresponsive to the needs of persons with disability. According to this study’s findings, even private organizations that offer services to persons with disabilities in the country to aid the failing government efforts face significant challenges getting support from government agencies tasked to manage the welfare of persons with disabilities. The question, therefore, is: what has gone wrong with the policy diffusion process from the transnational to the domestic levels? Why have transnational disability norms not made as much material change for Zambia, Malawi and other countries as have gender norms promoted through MDG 3? These questions, indeed, constitute the core concerns of this study and the subsequent chapters, through empirical data, attempt to address this challenge.

#### **4.4. Objectives of the Study**

This study is born out of an inspiration to build interdisciplinary tools for assessing transnational policy diffusion performance. The study has three core objectives.

1. The major objective of this study is to demonstrate that ideas matter in transnational policy diffusion. As such, this study seeks to create an ideational niche for evaluating

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<sup>42</sup> See section 5 Mental Disorders Act Chapter 305 of the Laws of Zambia.

disability policy diffusion in southern Africa. While it is easy to understand the policy cycle and to use a policy's own path to evaluate its performance, it is rare that policy scholars evaluate policy performance comparative to other policies within the same social-political and economic domains, let alone from an ideational perspective. The study capitalizes on this conceptual vacuum to conceptualize an interdisciplinary conceptual dialogue.

2. Second, this study seeks to destabilize the often-unquestioned ideological proliferation of Western-centric activist agendas. Rather than take it at its face value, this study aims to expose the often power-laden dynamics that underlie policy and ideational transfer. To achieve this, I raise questions about development approaches to southern Africa in particular, and to the global South in general. I question the general assumptions undergirding development policy that is the primary drive for development-based and the rights-based approaches to disability policy diffusion.
3. Finally, I seek to develop a policy design paradigm responsive to the socio-economic and political challenges of persons with disability in southern Africa. While policies will inevitably travel, I challenge the assumption that policy ideas promulgated at the transnational level should apply the same way to all contexts. I demonstrate this by weaving through intricate scholarly thoughts that expose political, cultural, epistemological, and ontological elements that undergird ideas and the subsequent policy conceptions they beget.

## **4.5. Research Approach and Design**

The study employs content analysis and semi-structured interviews with the core objective to process-trace approaches employed by TNAs in both disability and MDG 3 policy design and implementation. By examining published government documents and those from regional and international bodies, key factors of Malawian and Zambian disability and gender policies, transnational influence, and public perceptions are reflected throughout this study. Appendices A, B, C, and D summarize some of the key gender and disability policies in the two countries from various textual sources.

### ***4.5.1 Data Collection Procedures***

#### ***4.5.1.1. Plans Versus Reality Check***

In the first draft of my research proposal, I had set out to conduct 60 interviews between Malawi and Zambia in two months. In their written feedback, all four of my PhD advisory committee members said the timeframe was ambitious and unattainable. Second, almost each one of them advised 60 interviews were too many because in interviewing, one reaches a point of saturation where the next interview adds little or no value to the previous one. “Keep some of those interview plans for after the PhD,” one of my committee members remarked. I heeded both pieces of advice, adjusting my field research period to three months and the number of interviews to 40, split evenly between the two countries. Subsequent weeks in the field would only confirm how truly overambitious my initial plans were. Even with the adjustments I made, it turned out the three months were inadequate to cover 40 interviews. Despite sending out emails and letters to target participants, the feedback was poor. Even after employing snowballing techniques, many organizations I initially contacted either did not respond or

declined to meet. Undeniably, my patience was tested, especially when dealing with government officials and, in many cases in Malawi, with local implementers of TNA projects.

The second reality check moment was the realization of the thin disability TNAs' spread in both countries. Coupled with declines for interviews, my target population was further narrowed. Comparatively, Malawi was harder than Zambia in recruiting. On the contrary, there were many gender-based organizations and many were willing to participate in the study. Nevertheless, Malawian gender-based organizations were less amenable to participation than their Zambian counterparts.

Two factors particularly came to the fore with the thin spread of disability TNAs. First, although some disability TNAs exist in name, their involvement with disability would have been project-specific for a specific period. It, therefore, means that the planning for interviews, if based on web searches and, even with the collaboration of a research assistant in the country of study, could result in numerical shortfalls of participants. For example, while Irish Aid was involved in a regional project called Promoting Rights and Opportunities for People with Disabilities in Employment through Legislation (PROPEL), it no longer had active disability programs running. PROPEL, implemented in Zambia from January 2014 to December 2015, is the most robust disability project ever rolled out in the country and in several other African countries and every web search brings it up almost as a household disability representation of the country. However, project-specific commitment is a major challenge to disability activism in Malawi and in Zambia because it raises not only questions of sustenance, but also of top-down prioritization of needy areas for policy adjustment and implementation.

Second, because of the thin presence of primary disability TNAs, my research population expanded to include those organizations receiving donor funding and technical support to

advance disability policy at the local level on behalf of TNAs. For example, TNAs like the Norwegian Association of the Disabled who are heavily involved in disability funding in Zambia did not have real presence in the country but their programs, through a network of Norwegian affiliates like Opportunity Zambia sustained Norwegian values and goals for disability. These organizations, although local, carry out the mandates of their donors and account to them through program and project reports that need to meet adherence thresholds for a continued flow of financial and technical support.

#### *4.5.1.2. Sampling and Field Preparations*

My sample included TNAs, government ministries responsible for social welfare and departments responsible for human rights promotion, local organizations linked to TNAs' agendas on disability and gender, and individuals. My sampling frame was specific to those TNAs that funded gender and/or supported gender and disability programming and those organizations carrying out gender and/or disability work on behalf of funders. Although I set out not to involve persons with disabilities themselves, some leaders of DPOs were willing to participate in the study.

The interviews (n=48, i.e., Zambia: n=24; Malawi: n=24) were conducted from April to August 2018 in Lusaka, Zambia's capital city, and in Lilongwe and Blantyre, Malawi's capital and main economic center, respectively. In Zambia, I interviewed 16 disability organizations, mostly primarily transnational actors, and 8 gender-based organizations. In Malawi, I interviewed 14 disability organizations and individual participants, and 10 gender-based organizations. For either country, I tried to balance between disability-focused TNAs and Gender-focused ones although in many cases the same organizations such as the EU and



UNICEF supported both gender and disability activism. Although disaggregating the organizational policy focus is important, talking to organizations dealing with both policy areas revealed some significant differences in how the same TNAs apportioned resources and invested in policy diffusion strategies in the two policy areas.

Two months before leaving for field visits, I engaged two research assistants (one for each country). With them, I drew up lists of relevant international organizations, local NGOs, and CSOs working in and/or funding gender or disability policy work. I drafted a standard letter to all target organizations, varying contents only to suit individual organizations to request appointments for interviews with relevant technocrats and specialists. In many cases, organizations responded with suggestions of dates and times for interviews. In other cases, we needed to make follow-up telephone calls, sometimes several, to obtain appointments. Out of the 37 initially contacted in Zambia, a total of 21 granted interviews, representing a turnout of 57 percent. The other 43 percent either did not respond to letters and emails or gave reasons for declining. In Malawi, out of the total 28 contacted, only 12 granted us interviews, representing a turnout of 42 percent. However, we also utilized snowballing techniques that resulted in many interviews with organizations we did not know about but were rated as very influential in the two policy domains. The common reasons for declining interviews were:

- No time to meet due to busy schedule;
- Repeated “I will call you back” responses (never calling back);
- Need for higher-level authorization and clearance to meet and talk;
- Not confident to discuss the topic in sufficient detail;
- Without payment, no meeting. I charge consultancy fees for meetings;

- The researcher has inadequate proof for institutional affiliation (specific to Malawi).

In one incident, I withdrew a request for an interview because a government official demanded a bribe to grant the interview. An eyebrow-raising discovery for me was that a Canadian post-doctoral researcher from McGill University had a much easier experience obtaining interviews with many of the same organizations, including government ministries, that I had struggled to access in Zambia. Two other Zambian colleagues who had completed their doctoral studies in Canada and attending conferences in Zambia during my field research shared similar experiences as mine. A post-mortem analysis of the experience led me to the conclusion, perhaps debatable, that post-colonial attitudes among Zambians (or Africans in general) favored more researchers with some American-European origins. In other words, “white privilege”. At that point, I realized that perhaps my own affiliation with a western university, *ceteris paribus*, placed me at an advantage over a colleague from a local or African-based university. As I will illustrate in subsequent chapters, this in itself, is important for understanding how North-South interactions could be important sources of ideational power asymmetries, both at the individual and at the institutional levels.

#### **4.5.2. Interview Process**

Because transnational actors and local civil society organizations in both disability and gender activism are concentrated in urban areas in the two countries, the interviewees were all from urban areas. In my emails and letters requesting interviews, I proposed meeting participants at their office spaces unless they otherwise desired. In Zambia, all interviews except for one took place in a quiet, isolated space at workplaces of participants. The reason that the one exception

took place elsewhere had nothing to do with confidentiality, but scheduling conflicts that necessitated meeting after office hours at a neutral location. In Malawi, all interviews took place at participants' office spaces or individuals' homes.

The interviews centered on understanding the exact approaches that TNAs employed in diffusing policy in the two policy domains. For local CSOs and NGOs, we asked if local beliefs, identities, cultural norms and practices influence social perceptions, attitudes towards and treatment of persons with disability and gender relations. We further asked if TNA support, through program funding, prioritized ideational transformation, comparing approaches between programs towards MDG 3 and those for disability policy. Examples of questions we asked are: (a) For MDG 3: (i) What programs did international organizations support/fund to help the Malawian/Zambian government achieve MDG 3? (ii) What are some of the cultural challenges with gender equality in Malawi/Zambia? (iii) What (if any) programs were designed/supported to address these challenges? (b) For disability policy: (i) What have been the main priorities for advocates, donors, and the government in eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities in Malawi/Zambia? (ii) What would you say are the three main objectives driving disability rights advocacy in Malawi/Zambia today? (iii) How have international organizations helped support government address cultural/social stereotypes/context-specific challenges of disability?<sup>43</sup> The interview lengths varied, with longest lasting 68 minutes and the shortest 15 minutes. A full list of questions we employed in the interviews is in Appendix 8.

Throughout the interview process, we used an electronic voice recorder as well as note-taking techniques to record the data. We then blended the two sources into transcriptions at the end of each day. However, due to scheduling conflicts and long distances between interview

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<sup>43</sup> A complete version of the questions used during the interviews are in Appendix 8.

venues, it was not always feasible to do the transcriptions on the same day. At the end of the field visit, the data were coded and processed through NVivo, a qualitative computer research application. As opposed to using fixed analytical tools, I use iterative techniques, such as constant revisiting of data to draw patterns, themes, and categories. Emerging themes informed subsequent interviews and points for clarification and follow up. In qualitative research, iterative techniques help to connect the data with emerging insights, progressively leading to refined focus and understanding in subsequent data collection; sometimes phrasing questions differently to follow up on previous insights.

#### ***4.5.3. Methodological Limitations***

The most significant challenges for this study were time and financial resources. While it was relatively easy to secure interviews in Zambia, it was harder to secure committed participants in Malawi. Participants frequently declined interviews. In many cases, when they granted the interviews, they postponed the interviews. In other situations, participants did not want to talk for more than half an hour. Despite presenting them with ethics approval letters from both the University of Saskatchewan and the Malawian authorities overseeing research in the country, some participants insisted I did not have enough documentation to obtain an interview with them. Still in other situations, participants seemed to expect material gains from the interviews. This was not unique to Malawi. A few participants in Zambia diverted during or at the end of the interview to ask if I could help them find donor funding in Canada. This is a blatant indication of how poverty, material lack and need, can be strong motivations for mobilization. This also signifies the vulnerability of these societies to the agendas of transnational actors.

Because of frequent refusals by interviewers to talk for longer than reasonable, several interviews in Malawi were discarded for not being substantive enough to provide quantifiable data suitable for analysis. On average, I expected interviews to last at least 30 minutes although some were shorter, particularly in Malawi, but with enough substance. Cumulatively, these factors led to the need for more time allocation to Malawi. As a result, several interviews were conducted via Skype when I had already returned to Canada and some were conducted by my local research assistant whom I sufficiently trained in qualitative research interviewing.

In terms of financial resources, I realized while in the field that traversing two countries was costlier than I had planned. In addition, I learned very late that the University of Saskatchewan did not advance financial support for research. Although the university would later reimburse some travel costs, meeting some unforeseen financial needs while in the field was challenging. An example was when the Malawian Government asked me to seek local ethics approval prior to conducting interviews, requiring me to make significant unbudgeted expenditures.

On the technical side, prior to my field research trip in March 2018, I enrolled into a paid NVivo course with the University of Saskatchewan's Social Sciences Research Laboratories (SSRL) that was poorly conducted and ultimately unhelpful. Subsequently, in addition to self-online training, I recruited a personalized expert trainer to enhance my NVivo skills.

#### ***4.5.4. Ethical Considerations***

In compliance with the University of Saskatchewan's research requirements, I completed the GSR 960 on research ethics. The course details the standard procedures for research with human

subjects. As a requirement, this study's proposal was submitted for approval to the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Committee for ethics compliance. In addition, the Malawian government requires all researchers in social science and humanities to obtain ethics approval and accreditation from its National Commission for Science and Technology.

Prior to every interview, I sought informed consent and signature on a standard University of Saskatchewan consent form (see Appendix E). In Zambia, participants were trusting and, without hesitating, signed the consent forms. I made sure to review the consent form with each of the participants to ensure we did not overlook anything that might have caused concern. In Zambia, the only instances where participants declined to sign the forms were with two government officials and the participant from the European Union who sought hierarchical approval prior to signing the consent form. After obtaining permission from the Ambassador, the participant signed the consent form. In Malawi, obtaining consent was harder. Frequently, participants were willing to participate but not to sign. Although they all, except for one, signed, creating a trusting atmosphere took a greater effort. In the process of obtaining local ethics approval, a government official remarked that Malawians were cautious about 'data mining'. Nevertheless, I managed to bring all interviewed participants to a comfortable atmosphere of trust and respect to exhaustively discuss my questions. Many commented at the end that the interview was not as intimidating or as 'intrusive' as they had earlier imagined.

Participants' consent to audio-record the discussions was also sought. In Zambia, all participants except two accepted to be recorded while in Malawi, 3 denied recording. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could answer only those questions that they were comfortable with. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of

any sort. Participants were guaranteed of anonymity and of the confidentiality in the handling and storage of the interview data. However, because the participating organizations are primarily advocacy in nature, they waived their right to anonymity and asked to be named as sources to help highlight their work and need for policy attention to their messages. I will code such with pseudo-names. As required by the University of Saskatchewan, all the research data will be deposited for safe-keep with the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy (JSGS) for a period of six years, after which it will be destroyed.

Findings from this study will be used to draft independent journal articles for publication. I will also share a simplified version of these findings with key disability organizations in Malawi and Zambia with the hope to contribute towards broader policy conceptualization and strategic engagement in the field. Further, findings will be considered for academic conferences, seminars, and workshop presentations.

#### **4.5. Data Analysis**

My data analysis followed a rigorous process of coding and comparative analysis. While most of the transcription of interview notes and audio recordings took place while doing fieldwork, some of it took place several weeks after returning to Canada. The reason is that some interviews only took place after I had returned. At the beginning of the process, I re-read all my transcriptions line by line. I listened to the audio recordings to ensure that my transcriptions reflected the contents of what was said. In the process, I made corrections to my initial transcription, originally written from notes. I then coded the text using NVivo computer software to draw thematic highlights. The coding process followed a rigorous process of identifying major themes (i.e. parent nodes) out of the transcriptions as opposed to following interview questions. Under

each key theme or node, I built child nodes for recurring sub-themes. The child nodes supported the major nodes and augmented all coding references to the parent nodes. I ran several queries to determine emerging patterns and trends in the data. These trends, represented by several figures and tables in Chapters 6 and 7, were the basis of my analysis and conclusions. I cross compared themes to determine how TNAs weighted major factors affecting either disability or gender policy in Malawi and in Zambia and compared the findings with the policy approaches they had designed.

#### **4.7. Reflexivity**

In addition to all the hard and fast rules of scientific research, there are several other important factors a researcher needs to observe to conduct successful interviews. Among them, the researcher needs to take a disposition called reflexivity (Dilley 2000). Giddens (1976: 17) describes reflexivity simply as “self-awareness”. Reflexivity entails that the researcher is aware that their interaction with participants is grounded on the researcher’s judgement and in their “encounter with the world” (Gouldner, 1970: 497). With reflexivity, the researcher comes to the realization that “the knowledge of the world cannot be advanced apart from their own knowledge of themselves and their position in the social world” (Gouldner: 321). Reflexivity, therefore, is a hermeneutical consciousness that demands a fundamental self-awareness of one’s biases and how that mediates knowledge of other people’s acts. As Gadamer (in Bleicher 1980) argues, understanding is always tied to a concrete historical situation, a particular case. Reflexivity enables us to realise that people are prejudiced differently than ourselves.

Accordingly, qualitative research requires reflexivity, demanding that the researcher attains reflexivity regarding what they bring to their study, what they observe, and how they



observe phenomena (Baker, 2018). The defining assumption of this research project is that there are no such things as neutral, unmediated, policy ideas. Social facts are always perspectival. As Morgan and Smirchic, (1980: 497) argue, “reality resides in the process through which it is created, and possible knowledge is confined to an understanding of that process.” Trained as a philosopher, and then as a political scientist, the question of epistemology (i.e., what constitutes knowledge; how we acquire knowledge; whether two people or societies can differ in knowledge and none be in error) has always concerned me.

With this epistemological and hermeneutical influence, I have always wondered about the legitimacy of universal standards set by the globalized world order. The question about how ideas conceived and promulgated by international organizations and institutions affect domestic actors has lingered on my mind for a very long time. I have wrestled with different ideologies and theoretical underpinnings of what drives international policy diffusion. Although I have not had the topic of disability specifically in mind for a very long, I have long inquired about the meaning of international development, the influence of international organizations and institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, and regional bodies like the European Union on countries in the global South. Without precisely understanding the neatly designed arguments about ideas in public policy, I wondered about the embedded political influence of international actors in contrast to the mandates they proclaim; about their loyalty to powerful states that finance them versus their autonomy in policy agendas; and about their mechanisms of policy transfer. On the other hand, I have been fascinated by the fact that the human population is inherently diverse, and that each society enjoys ontological uniqueness. These conceptual standings pushed me to begin to ask questions like: will globalization result into socio-economic systemic convergence? Does development mean the same thing for all? Whose ideas determine

universality? What does the universalization of an idea do to the autonomy of heterogeneous ontologies? What are the political implications of universalizing knowledge, ideas, and policies?

These, for me, constituted a large part of self-awareness in my pursuit of this project's goals. The opportunity to conduct a comparative study of TNA performance in policy diffusion was at the same time an opportunity to examine ideas and thoughts that had long lingered in my mind and, largely, constituted my academic inquiry throughout my post-secondary education. As Tierney and Clemens (2011) argue, objectivism does not mean independence between the researcher and the object of study. It goes beyond.

In addition to these epistemological and ideological factors, *ceteris paribus*, this study is influenced by positionality. First, sociologically I am an outsider to both policy subjects of this study. Women and people with disabilities tend to experience reality differently from men and people without disabilities, respectively. This, in itself, and no matter how well interviewees articulated their responses to my questions, inevitably limited my comprehension of their lived experience. Furthermore, this reality could limit the degree of openness for interviewees on the premise of limited trust. Persons with disabilities and women are sensitive to their personal experiences and they may guard their existential experiences against abuse and exploitation. Building trust in qualitative research is key and challenging especially where the researcher is an outsider. Although these limitations are inherent to this type of research, researchers should endeavor to manage their severity on research outcomes.

With this knowledge of reflexivity, my approach in this study, and the subsequent interpretation of the data, is implacably influenced by my interpretive lenses and the goals I set out to pursue.

#### **4.8. Conclusion**

The comparative qualitative case study method presents this study with unique strengths. First, the fact that it was done in a natural environment strengthens my chances to observe real life situations without biasing my participants' routine behavior towards their work on disability and gender (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Second, inserting myself in the context of TNAs' work allowed me to have unique depth of analysis than simply carrying out a survey (Dilley, 2000; Van Evera, 1997). Data collection transcends what the researcher hears from participants. It includes the researcher's own intuitions about what he observes and about the unspoken symbols, attitudes, mannerisms, and other outward manifestations of the research environment and its inhabitants, none of which could be captured in a survey questionnaire or interview sessions alone. Third, the value that actual field visits place on respondents also removes the perception that they are simply objects of study (Dilley, 2000; Gill et al., 2008; Winston, 1997). It values them as experts in issues they observe, what Douglas Ezzy calls (2010) 'communion'. Lastly, my approach did not confine me to one data-source. By use of multiple sources, my approach availed me the opportunity to observe TNAs' work on gender and disability from multiple angles, a factor that strengthens my observations and increases validity of my observations.

On the other hand, my approach raised some challenges. One important challenge I faced was what some scholars refer to as "too many variables and not enough cases," (Johnson, Reynolds, & Mycoff, 2015) and what I call "resource curse". Several times during my field visit I felt overwhelmed with data. In such times, it dawned on me how easily superfluous data could cloud my depth of analysis and, potentially, compromise my research output. I, in response, constantly relied on good data management skills and selection judgment. I maintained clear notes along with audio recordings, constantly undertook transcriptions to avoid memory lapses,

and when necessary, called back some participants to seek clarification on earlier statements. I also kept separate diaries with detailed notes about observations I had made during interviews that would later integrate into my transcription to amplify contexts and observations.

Despite all these challenges, the value of the comparative qualitative case study approach far outweighs the anticipated challenges. As a method of inquiry, qualitative case studies presented me the best opportunities to explore various perspectives of TNAs' work with governments and local organizations. It allowed me to examine how TNAs prioritize projects for financing and the implications for policy development; how host governments make decisions where to commit resources and where not to but still offer political lip-service.

## **CHAPTER 5: ORIGINS OF TRANSNATIONAL IDEA OF GENDER EQUALITY: TRANSNATIONAL AGENCY AND IDEATIONAL LEGITIMACY**

### **5.1. Introduction**

Since this study is primarily about ideas and how they affect policy diffusion, this short chapter introduces the genesis of the idea of gender equality, both among academic feminists and gender advocates, and how it grew into a big universalized human rights issue. Similar attention has already been given to the idea disability rights throughout the introductory chapters, particularly in Chapter 2, section 2.2.4 where I discuss key global actors in disability activism. The goal of this chapter is to highlight the importance of identifying the genesis of an idea in successful policy diffusion.

### **5.2. The Idea of Gender Equality in the Global Gender Discourse**

The idea of gender equality, prior to being a transnational norm, has a long history in the feminist school predating its institutionalization and transnationalization by TNAs like the United Nations. Feminist scholars present different, often overlapping, epistemological and methodological positions on the understanding of gender that are reflective of positivist and constructivist positions (Peterson, 2005). In her book *Two Paths to Women's Equality: Temperance, Suffrage, and the Origins of Modern Feminism*, Janet Zollinger Giele (1995) establishes the origins of feminist thought through the temperance movement and the suffrage movement in the United States (in Robnett, 1996). According to Giele (in Robnett, 1996:889), “the push for equal rights was a by-product of industrialization and the subsequent strain it imposed on men's and women's roles”. She argues that it was industrialization that “created a shift from rural to urban life, the advent of man as the sole breadwinner, lower birth rates, more

free time, and corresponding increase in religious and benevolent work outside the home” (in Robnett 1996: 889). Giele (in Robnett, 1996: 890) argues that “the impact of industrialization on middle and upper-class white women is essential for the emergence of women’s movement in all times and places.” In conclusion, she argues that “feminist movements come to different countries earlier or later depending on how soon women [are] faced with the contradictions of political or economic development” (in Robnett, 1996: 890).

Certainly, Giele’s functionalist approach to feminism is not unrivaled. Scholars like Peterson (2005) argue more along constructivist lines.<sup>44</sup> The point of referencing Giele is, however, not to accept the generalizability of her theory. Certainly, it is problematic to argue that women’s positions in society were unproblematic prior to the industrial era. Similarly, and as Robnett (1996) also observes, the uprising of feminist activism in non-industrial societies further renders Giele’s theory problematic. What is important about Giele’s theory, however, is that tracing the origins of ideas is crucial particularly in policy studies and in political studies in general. Particularly in the study of transnational policy diffusion, as Rose (1991) argues, policy learning should take into account context suitability of new policy lessons. Tracing the origins of ideas helps to explain epistemological factors that underpin these ideas and how, when transferred, they could adjust to make impact on context-specific variables. Further, because policy change has a lot to do with power relations among policy actors, tracing the origins of

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<sup>44</sup> Constructivists approach gender as a reproduction of male-female relations and how they affect the participation of women and men in society. For example, in political economy, constructivists point out “how men dominate the practice of and knowledge production about (what men define as) ‘economics’; how women’s domestic, reproductive and caring labor is deemed marginal to (male-defined) production and analyses of it; how orthodox models and methods presuppose male-dominated activities (paid work, the formal economy) and masculinized characteristics (autonomous, objective, rational, instrumental, competitive)” (Peterson, 2005: 501). This is compared to women’s work deemed as domestic, economically irrelevant, and “unskilled”. As a result, women occupy unpaid positions, construed as economically “trivial” as men occupy eminently affluent and economically “skilled” labor positions.

ideas helps us to understand whose policy ideas are adopted and for what reasons. Recognizing the tension between ideas and power struggles, Peter Hall's 1993 article on policy paradigms and policy change "stresses the tension between "puzzling" and "powering," which refer to learning processes and political struggles, respectively" (Béland et al, 2018, upcoming). Hall stresses that the study of policy change should include both dimensions "as focusing exclusively on what he calls "social learning" could hide the power dimension of paradigm shifts, which feature political struggles among a wide array of actors, in contrast to the more technocratic, lower-profile learning processes leading to first and second order changes" (Béland et al., 2018 upcoming).

As a constructivist research, this study takes seriously the implications of origins of ideas in the policy diffusion process. The rationale of transnational policy ideas is based on the belief that certain ideas, norms, values, organizing principles or standardized procedures such as disability rights and gender equality rights, are universally applicable and, therefore, should be adopted and supported by all rational actors (Krook and True (2010: 104). Transnationalism, therefore, is founded on the basic principle of universality of an idea based on an interpretation of rationality. This, indeed, constitutes the core inquiry of this study. For example, the transnationalization of gender equality, expressed through several rights of women in international treaties, is based on the fundamental precept that gender equality is a universal truth. However, acknowledging that universalized "truths" have social origins and that rationality is "bounded"<sup>45</sup> in Simon's (1955) terms, is important if these "truths" are to be impactful in new policy contexts. The diffusion of the idea of gender equality, for example, with its Eurocentric origins, should seek strategic ways to impact on context-specific conditions, customs, beliefs,

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<sup>45</sup> In Chapter 2, I discussed the concept of bounded rationality as propounded by Simon (1955). To reiterate, Simon argues that that human rationality is incapable of comprehensive information computation to solve decision challenges and, therefore, that humans approximate informational vectors and rational decisions.

and values that pose different challenges for women and, at the same time, context-specific opportunities that could enhance socialization, localization, and eventual institutionalization of the idea. Since rationality is bounded, policy diffusion mechanisms should engage rational frontiers to expand rational legitimacy of new frames. But before expanding on this perspective through empirical data and analysis, let me explain how the concept of gender equality has become transnational.

### **5.3. International Institutions and Agency in Policy Transnationalization**

The global impetus for gender equality can be traced back to the United Nations' Charter which, in Article 1, stipulates one of its chief purposes as “to achieve international co-operation [...] in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion” (United Nations, 1945).<sup>46</sup> Since its inception, the United Nations has played a key role in the transnationalization of gender equality norms, particularly in fighting gender discrimination which it defines as

any distinction, exclusion, restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field (CEDAW, 1979).<sup>47</sup>

Although the United Nations has taken major steps in promoting gender equality through various initiatives (e.g., establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1945; declaration of the International Women's Year in 1975; organization of World Conferences on Women; declaration of the UN Decade for Women – 1976-1985; the landmark establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as the

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>; Accessed 8/15/2018.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>; Accessed 8/26/2018.



United Nations Women, and many more), the single most influential step it has taken in this respect is the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. Since its adoption, the CEDAW has garnered 99 signatories and 188 state parties.<sup>48</sup> During field interviews, the CEDAW was by far the most referenced treaty by gender activists and TNAs as the central tool for promoting gender equality work in Zambia. Other important UN benchmarks for gender activism include the MDGs, specifically MDG number 3 (promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women) and their successors, the SDGs, in particular SDG number 5 (to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls).

Although the idea of feminism predates the establishment of the United Nations, as earlier noted, contemporary gender activism emanates from the UN's declarations and pronouncements of equality irrespective of sex. In 1985, the UN convened the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace in Nairobi, Kenya.<sup>49</sup> The conference, convened at the time gender activism was becoming a transnational movement, attracted an unprecedented 15,000 representatives from NGOs and gender activists (UN A/CONF.116/28).<sup>50</sup> The United Nations fames this conference, with its forward-looking strategies to the year 2000, as the mother of modern global feminism. Therefore, as True and Mintrom (2001) also note, the global gendering of development has primarily been championed by TNAs, including the United Nations, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), distinguished persons like former US

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/002701383>; Accessed 8/26/2018.

<sup>50</sup> <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/108800?ln=en>; Accessed 8/15/2018.

Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and other distinguished personalities that have influenced national policies on gender equality.

While TNAs have generally pursued gender equality through gender mainstreaming and the pursuits of rights, the next three chapters examine how TNAs treated the importance of social-cultural factors in the constitution of social identities and how they impact gender relations, and how, altering them requires more than legislation and policies in the formal institutions. Often, TNAs have a bias toward political institutional engagement in policy diffusion (Keck and Sikkink, 1999). At the global level, the multiplication of treaties and the enforcement of their provisions through domestic legislation and policies is assumed to annihilate “bad” practices. TNAs often promote standardized policy instruments that, although they reflect changes in government policy documents, leave the local ideational factors unaltered, therefore only attaining Hall’s first and second orders of policy change.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

In his recent book *Disability and Poverty in the Global South: Renegotiating Development in Guatemala*, Grech (2015: 12) warns about what he calls “epistemic violence”. Epistemic violence occurs when the originality of ideas, their historical assumptions, and their ontological standings are ignored by policy actors when transferring them from one location to another. Epistemic violence is the failure to pay due alertness and consideration of pre-existing epistemological offerings, and it often occurs in asymmetrical relations. While many professionals and academics, particularly human rights advocates, take policy influence lightly, its implications for social identity, epistemological entitlement, and ontological sovereignty, all of which immensely matter to any society, is immensely significant. It is for this reason that this

chapter traces the genesis of the idea of gender equality, something of key analytical significance in subsequent chapters. The next chapters present data and examine if TNAs have been responsive to local ideas in the diffusion of transnational gender and disability policy ideas.

## **CHAPTER 6: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TRANSNATIONAL GENDER AND DISABILITY NORMS DIFFUSION IN ZAMBIA**

Parts of this chapter formed the basis for an article submitted in January 2019 to *Disability & Society*, by Privilege Haang'andu, entitled "Why Transnational Actors Perform Poorer in Disability Than in Gender Policy Diffusion - Inter-Policy Comparative Case of Zambia".

### **6.0. Introduction**

This chapter is the first empirical part of this study. It presents field data and analyses within the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter 3. The chapter constitutes two major sections: gender policy diffusion processes in Zambia and disability policy diffusion processes in Zambia. I divide each section into two parts. In the first, I present the data while in the second, I discuss and analyze the findings. At the very end, I draw comparatives from the two policy areas in the form of discussion.

I interviewed a total of 24 organizations in Zambia: n=16 (disability) and n=8 (gender policy entrepreneurs). The organizations were primarily TNAs with a few local organizations executing programs funded by their TNA partners. I also interviewed three government bodies; one ministry, the Human Rights Commission of Zambia, and a statutory body responsible for disability policy monitoring. Prior to coding the data, I re-read the transcriptions completed during field work. I listened to the audio recordings to make sure the transcriptions accurately depicted the interviews. Listening to audio recordings, I adjusted the transcriptions accordingly. Using NVivo, following Braun and Clarke's (2014) concept of thematic analysis, I coded the data into thematic nodes that dominated the discussions. My coding process did not necessarily follow the question format. I then ran several queries with nodes to generate comparatives.

My data analysis, based both on thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2014) and on content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), was driven by a set of objectives that I address in

the three parts of each section. First, I wanted to find out what some of the prominent context-specific social factors about gender and disability in Zambia were. Second, I sought to understand how gender and disability activism balanced political institutional engagement and structural engagement. Third, I was interested to know what organizational factors came out as shortfalls of the gender/disability movements. Bearing all these factors in mind, I therefore wanted to critically assess differences between gender and disability policy work in Zambia from a transnational perspective.

## 6.1. Gender Policy Diffusion Processes in Zambia

## 6.2. Data Presentation

**Table 6.1. Gender Policy Participants**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Categorization</i>
<i>Family Fellowship Global Ministry</i>	Pentecostal Church
<i>Joint Country Program of (Danish and Norwegian Church Aid)</i>	TNA
<i>A European Embassy</i>	TNA
<i>UN Agency</i>	TNA
<i>Women for Change</i>	NGO
<i>Government Ministry</i>	Government
<i>Zambia National Women's Lobby</i>	NGO
<i>Women and Law in Southern Africa</i>	INGO
<i>N =</i>	<b>8</b>
<i>Source: Field Data</i>	

According to the UNDP 2016 Zambia Human Development Index Report, Zambia has a Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.587, ranking it 132nd out of 155 countries in the 2014 index (UNDP, 2016: 35). Later statistics published elsewhere show that Zambia's GII reduced to 0.526

in 2015 (Malawi UNDP 2017 HDI Report). The GII represents the loss in human development because of inequalities between men and women in specified socio-economic measures. In this case, the UNDP based its measure of GII on three parameters: reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity. To measure reproductive health, the UNDP used maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates. For the empowerment rate, the UNDP used the share of seats in parliament held by women and the comparative completion rates for secondary and higher education between the genders. To measure economic activity, the UNDP compared the rate of participation for women and men in the labor market (UNPD, 2016). At the time of this UNPD study, the UNDP found that only 12.7 per cent of parliamentary seats were held by women and only 25.8 percent of adult women had secondary school level of education compared to 44 percent of men with similar education (UNDP, 2016). The UNPD found that the female participation in the labor market was lower among women (73.1 percent) compared to men (85.6 per cent) (UNDP, 2016).

These statistics reveal deep socio-economic inequalities between women and men in Zambia. Although addressing these inequalities, like elsewhere in the world, corrective political institutional measures are important, the existence of these inequalities signifies deeper social and political factors that undergird gender inequalities that manifest themselves in these three measured parameters. To limit diagnosis to political institutional inadequacies in labor laws, inequitable political participation, or inaccessible health care systems is not good enough, in fact simplistic. The interview data amplifies more factors, elusive to economic quantification, that better explain these wide gender inequalities in Zambia. The data shows that, beyond the observable yardsticks for GII used by the UNDP, deeper social factors underlie gender inequalities. Factoring these variables is crucial in explaining policy change and in determining

the appropriate mechanisms for transnational policy diffusion. In addition, accounting for social factors helps to target and attain Hall's third order policy change whereas dwelling on political institutional instrumental factors limits the level of policy change to the first and second orders of change which are insufficient in reversing ideological positions.

I started the discussions with participants by asking what they observed as the most significant gender inequalities in the Zambian society. Responses were very similar to those outlined by the UNDP report cited above. However, when I probed further to ask why these inequalities existed, participants began to mention different factors. I therefore decided to prioritize these factors in my coding process. From Table 6.2.,<sup>51</sup> all participants stressed that entrenched social and religious ideas, norms, values, and beliefs negatively influenced the female-male relations. They referred to social influences 73 times, highlighting their primacy in determining gender relations. This idea was the most referenced throughout the interviews on gender equality followed by the participants' observation that TNAs focused their attention to addressing social factors affecting gender relations, which was referenced 36 times. Repeatedly, participants remarked that "the biggest pitfall [was] social norms". A leader of an international women's organization focusing on legal reforms, responding to how her organization weighted the influence of culture and that of institutions on gender relations, said:

I would say culture weighs 80 percent. Also, politicians and policy makers are products of culture; they take with them into administrative positions the mentalities of cultural influence. They determine how they perceive equality. For example, the argument about age limit for marriage, MPs wanted 16 for sexual consent. The other example is the distribution of customary land. Men have too much power over land ownership. MPs

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<sup>51</sup> From Table 6.2., the child nodes represent specific social and institutional characteristics pertinent to understanding influential social attributes and institutional variables in the gender policy discourse. Some of the important highlight child nodes, disaggregated from their parent nodes, include patriarchy and culture; religion; and weak implementation of policies and laws. While it is important to understand the parent aggregate statistics, child nodes reveal a clearer characterization of the scores. For example, the "weak institutions" at 75 percent hides the facts that 50 percent of the respondents said institutions were weak due to poor implementation and not due to non-existence of institutions.

wanted men favored. Men in institutions are the same. Polygamy remains legal in Zambia.

A prominent factor among these social norms was religion. For some respondents, religion reinforced the culturally entrenched male supremacy instinct when it preached women's submission in marriage. Many respondents argued that the declaration of the country as a Christian nation compounded the tendency (I discuss the religious influence more extensively later in the chapter in subsection 5.3.2). "We are a highly religious nation, particularly Christian with a male-centric focus to biblical interpretations. Women are helpers, not equals", remarked a program specialist from a major coalition of European TNAs.

Although all respondents admitted that social norms and religious beliefs were problematic, 87.5 percent of them said existing laws and policies were strong enough to advance women's rights, expedite judicial services for gender-based violence, and to improve enrollment of girls in schools through various policy interventions (e.g., returning to school of young mothers after child birth, and withdrawal of young brides from child marriages and placing them in schools). However, asked how they saw TNAs apportioning resources between institutional strengthening and in influencing social norms, and through what strategies, 87.5 percent of respondents said TNAs and government had focused significant resources on normative change while 75 percent said TNAs and the government had focused significant resources on institutional responses (see Figure 6.1. for contrasts in TNAs' apportionment of resources). The TNAs' balance between focusing on social factors and on institutional reforms and strengthening is strikingly balanced. Several participants mentioned that TNAs employed a multi-sectoral approach, involving stakeholders from different fields, in their pursuit of MDG 3.

Despite the many challenges in gender equality, discussants stressed the progress that had been made in the promotion of gender equality and in empowerment of women in economic



sustainability. For example, several participants observed that Zambia was the only country in the region with a woman vice-president elected as a running-mate to the president. As well, women had ascended to several senior ministerial, judicial, and private sector positions. For example, a leader of a key women's organization observed:

We have made significant improvements at cabinet level in representation; we have always been lower than 10 percent but now we are at 30 percent<sup>52</sup> [...]. Although we are as low as 11 percent at local government, it is double the figure of 2011 [...]. We also have a female vice president who puts our country on the spotlight. The judiciary has been led by women chief justices twice consecutively now. We have also many female senior judges- standing at 45 percent representation.

In general, the difference in TNA and government focus on social factors and on political institutional engagement is minimal and analytically insignificant. In almost every interview, participants enumerated the legislation and policies in place but almost in the same breath said legislation alone was not enough. A government official from a key ministry on gender said,

Law enforcement alone cannot reverse these trends. In fact, if you use the law sternly, there will be resistance from society, there will be a backlash. We have taken measured steps to sensitize communities even before implementing the Anti-GBV act. We cannot just go into communities and tell them we have banned A, B, and C and they are illegal and expect immediate compliance. We are not targeting compliance, we want attitudinal transformation; change of minds, not just laws.

This realization resulted in government and TNAs' focusing on engaging with social norms and ideas that supported practices that disadvantaged women while at the same time strengthening institutions. Many organizations admitted social norms were so entrenched that good framing strategies were needed to avoid a backlash and to maximize gains. Women for Change, a key partner with the European Union and several other TNAs in Zambia observed:

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<sup>52</sup> Significantly higher than the 2014 UNDP figure of 12 percent in its GII report.

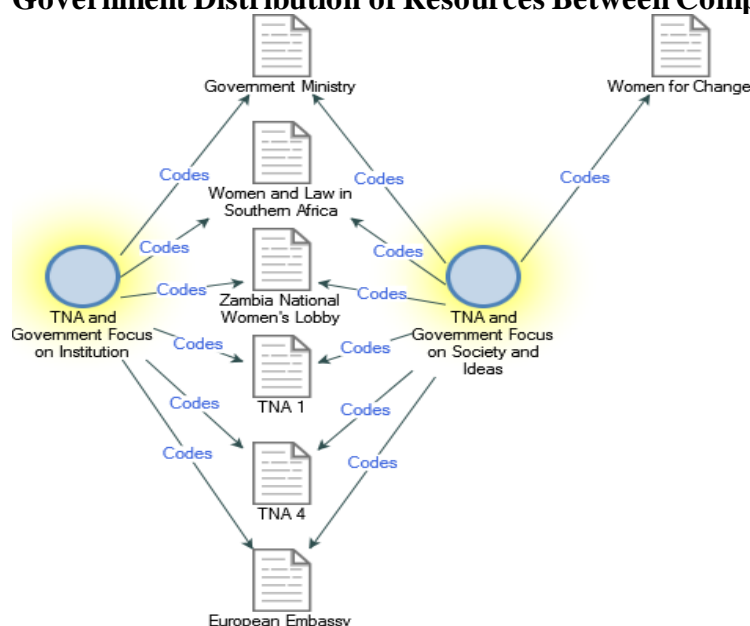
**Table 6.2. Gender Policy Diffusion Codebook** (*Source: NVivo generation of data coding*)

Nodes Name	Description	Sources	References
Institutions Ok	Good laws in place, government leadership responsive to women's issues, political representation good.	7	30
Laws and policies		7	18
Political will good		2	12
Problem is Socialization	Cultural beliefs, patriarchy, customs, dual legal system.	8	73
Child marriages and domestic suppression of girls		3	4
Culture and Patriarchy		6	18
GBV		6	8
Religion and bad influence		6	13
Social status - education, employment, economic		4	9
Problem is Weak Institutions	Poor laws, weak policies, lack of political will.	6	25
Dual legal system bad		4	5
Political will weak		3	4
Weak implementation		4	8
Weak Women Representation in Elective Positions		5	8
TNA and Government Focus on Institution	Strengthening laws, policies, services.	6	28
Budget support, services		4	14
TNA and Government Focus on Society and Ideas		7	36

We target chiefs and traditional leaders because they are the custodians of norms and social practices. Our patriarchal traditions made women property of men; they inherited widows through sexual cleansing. Twenty years of education has worked to reverse the trend. Legal changes alone were insufficient, in fact insignificant [...]. At first, chiefs confessed to us that human rights and gender equality were foreign to local cultures; they were also a threat to cultural erosion. One way that helped us convince chiefs to buy into our messaging was we did not go to tell them we were advocating for *gender equality* and *human rights* (emphasis mine). We framed our messages encouraging partnership between men and women [...]. Chiefs, particularly in Southern Province, came out of these long trainings with local declarations denouncing early marriages; promoting girls' education, etc. they bought spaces in the media to promulgate their declarations. Eventually chiefs in other parts of the country started to envy their counterparts and they too wanted to be trained by women for Change.

The data suggests that TNAs in Zambia, in coordination with NGOs, have struck an important equilibrium between the idea of gender equality as a transnational norm and domestic social-cultural ideas. In other words, to address an ideationally entrenched phenomenon like gender inequality, one needs to examine individual societies to understand the context-specifics that harm and disadvantage women and to start the revolution from there. This is an ideational and not a legislative revolution. In what follows, I present some of the findings about context-specific understandings about the status of gender equality in Zambia.

**Figure 6.1. Diagrammatic Representation of Respondents' Assessment of TNA and Government Distribution of Resources Between Competing Causal Factors**



*Source: NVivo coding*

### **6.3. Analysis: A Sociological Approach to Understanding the Data**

#### ***6.3.1. Traditional Concepts of Gender Relations***

The Zambian society is ethnolinguistically heterogeneous. Despite this ethnolinguistic heterogeneity, the society shares many common social norms and ideological identities prevalent among several *bantu-speaking* people of Sub-Saharan Africa. Constituted by 73 ethnic groups, the Zambian society holds certain traditional norms that structure gender relations. Despite its strong urbanization, customs and norms are retained across the society and are passed on informally in family and community socialization and formally at critical times in one's life. For instance, prior to marriage, both men and women are inducted into cultural expectations of gender relations in marriage. The failure to uphold these expectations commonly constitutes justifications for divorce and domestic gender-based violence in Zambia.

In his survey of gender-based violence in Zambia, Klomegah (2008) touches on some of the fundamental factors emphasized during pre-marriage courses: sex as the center of marriage - therefore a husband should have sex when he wants it; a wife cooks for her husband, and she should not burn the food; a wife should never leave home without the husband's authorization; a wife should not argue with her husband (in other words, he is always right); and a wife looks after children. A good wife upholds these "commandments" with one attitude: submission. According to local marriage counsellors, a husband who cites one of these as his reason for beating a wife or for having extra marital affairs is valorized against his "uncultured" wife. Customarily, men can demand their bride price back from their in-laws if their wives do not measure up to cultural expectations. Institutions like the Catholic Church, prior to offering matrimonial sacraments, demand evidence of compliance with one's customs, such as payment

of bride price (Marriage Tribunal of Archdiocese of Lusaka). The women's organizations that took part in this study observed that culture was strong and that, regardless of one's level of education, all Zambians were inducted in the same processes and teachings about marriage and gender relations. These organizations attributed some of the primary factors driving gender inequalities as emanating from these social norms.

In Zambia, gender inequalities are manifested in many ways, most visibly through discrepancies of economic and political gains and through trends of gender-based violence. According to a 2008 study, almost 40 percent of women between ages 15 and 49 with post-secondary education confessed to abuse in marriage and a close figure of men confessed to abuse, including physical abuse, of their wives (Klomegah, 2008). Prominent manifestations of gender inequality, according to the participants, include gender-based violence, child marriage, inequitable access to land, and inequitable representation of women in public decision-making places (e.g. 18 percent at National Assembly and 8 percent at local government level, according to the ZNWL<sup>53</sup>, 2017).

In addition, almost all of gender-based organizations interviewed observed that women fared lower in education and literacy levels compared to their male counterparts and, consequently, were subjected to occupying lower economic status and employment, predominantly in the informal sector and in rural small-scale agriculture. Without dissent, the organizations also stated that the perennial subjection of women and girls to this social status resulted into the widespread problems of early child marriages, sex work, among others. As one organization noted:

Early child marriage has been a perennial issue spelling out gender inequalities in our society. Statistically, Zambia has one of the highest number of children in marriage. The

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<sup>53</sup> The Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL) is an umbrella organization of several women's organizations in Zambia with a reach into neighboring countries within the region.

practice of child marriage forces young girls into marriage life for economic gains through lobola (bride price). Parents prefer to educate their boy children over their daughter.

Phrased differently, this sentiment came up almost in every interview with the gender movement representatives. In another statement, the same organization noted:

Women's economic status remain low. They are mostly in the informal sector and in rural areas while formal sector jobs in urban areas are predominantly held by men. Because of their low economic status, women find it difficult to access finance through loans. This limits their access to land and other economic services like agricultural inputs.

The question is, would legislation and institutionalization of gender equality norms reduce these inequalities? According to TNAs and the women movement in Zambia the solution lies elsewhere. According to a United Nations agency participant, "patriarchal mindsets and socialization are the main challenge. The biggest pitfall is social norms where boys are raised to aim at productive career paths while girls are taught obedience, service, and 'compliant' behavior. Gender roles boys and girls play socialize them differently".

Stressing the point, a representative from an embassy of a European country with robust funding to gender policy noted: "All Zambian cultures are male-dominant. Parents' attitudes to child instruction is problematic. They teach boys to be responsible while girls are neglected. 60 percent of our problems with gender are nothing but socialization". A leader of an umbrella body of women's organizations noted:

Culture, values – we are a very patriarchal society. We have very progressive laws, the Anti Gender-Based Violence Act which spells out very stiff penalties – 20 years imprisonment; but why do these vices continue? It's our value systems and our religious beliefs. We even have a Gender Equality Act and the National Gender Policy. But culture, patriarchy drags us back.

There is a consensus among TNAs working on gender policy in Zambia and the local gender-based organizations they fund that the problem of gender inequality, exhibited in the multiple ways established above, resides not in the lack of institutions and domestication of

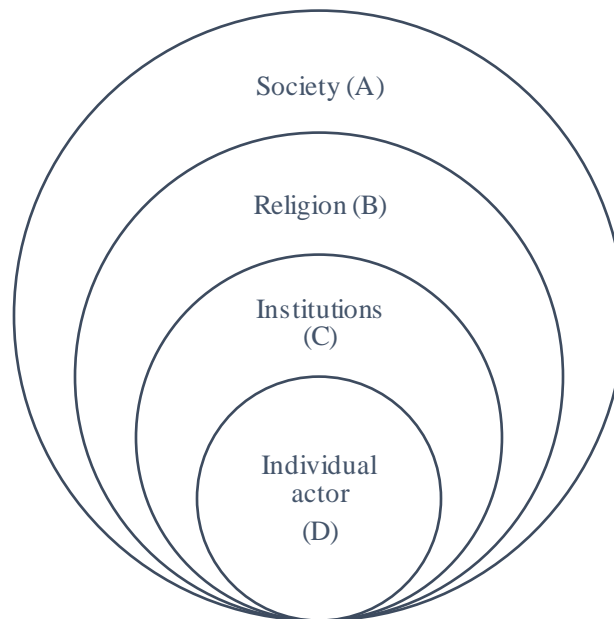
transnational principles at the legislative level but in the entrenched ideas that define gender relations in the country. In his 2008 study on perceptions of gender-based violence among men and women in Zambia, Roger Klomegah found that, in fact, “the majority of married women in Zambia believe that wife beating is justified. On the contrary, the majority of husbands do not think these circumstances warrant wife beating, except for a wife going out without telling the husband” (563).<sup>54</sup> One of the five circumstances Klomegah examined in his interviews was “wife beating if she refuses to have sex with him”. While 57.3 percent of women respondents agreed beating was justified in this instance, 62.5 percent of men disagreed. From statements from TNAs and NGOs above, and from Klomegah’s findings, the “negative” ideas about gender equality are not perpetrated by men alone in Zambia. Representatives of women’s organizations spoken to in Zambia argued that women themselves re-enforced women subservience through standardized pre-marriage lessons that teach women to be subservient to husbands. The representative from one organization remarked: “we also work to educate traditional marriage counselors on certain negative attitudes they imbue in women about marriage. We have been helping to review their syllabi for marriage. They usually teach reticence in marriage – bedroom issues stay in the bedroom”.

As Hall (1993) stresses, the role of ideas in explaining paradigm shifts is crucial. The mere shift of legislation and policy documents (what he calls policy instruments) does not amount to the change of paradigms in gender relations. Instead, it is the change of ideas of the actors, and in this case not just political actors, but social actors themselves that are deeply immersed in variant ideological “truths” about gender relations that would define real change.

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<sup>54</sup> The five circumstances he examined were: 1. Wife beating if she goes out without telling him; wife beating justified if she argues with him; wife beating if she refuses to have sex with him; wife beating if she burns the food.

**Figure 6.2. Locating Gender Inequality in the Zambia Society**



*Source: Abstraction from Data*

### **6.3.2. Religion and Gender Stereotypes**

In 1991, President Frederick Chiluba declared Zambia a Christian nation. The 1996 constitution amendments adopted the declaration. In this study, 75 percent of participants reported that religion played a significant role in supporting negative traditional perceptions about gender relations. In his study, Klomegah (2008: 565) found that “wives who are affiliated with Protestantism and Muslim religions are less likely to experience abuse than wives affiliated with Catholic religion. On the contrary, wives belonging to other religions are 2.56 times more likely to be abused than wives who have affiliation with Catholicism.” Explanations for these are subject for debate. One could argue, for instance, that Muslim women are so adherent to Islamic teachings about their place in marriage and society that they leave little room for antagonism. A Catholic nun whom I interviewed on these findings suggested that Catholicism was more traditional, conservative, and dogmatic in its teachings and scriptural interpretations. Therefore,



Catholic men were more likely to have stronger inclinations to patriarchy than their liberal Protestant counterparts. While women's organizations acknowledged the important role that religious ideas could play in building positive perceptions about gender relations and in entrenching gender equality, many noted that it, instead, had played an adverse role. An umbrella coalition of western TNAs said:

Zambia is a highly religious nation, particularly Christian with a male-centric focus to biblical interpretations. Women are helpers, not equals. (Another participant used an example: all men support women to be in politics, but not their own wives). In 2016, politics and the church spoke one language. Politicians use religious sentiments and networks to ascend to power, and yet these churches preach women's obedience, support, and helper, not equals.

An organization supporting women's rights and providing pro-bono legal services noted:

Religious leaders play a big role in the perpetration of gender-based violence. We work to expose them to negative effects of cultural practices that often thrive on skewed religious teachings and beliefs. In Zambia, with the declaration of the country as a Christian nation, religious leaders are held in significant trust. People entrust themselves entirely to religion and its teachings and this can be a significant source of inspiration for attitudes and behavior. Often, teachings on women submission to husbands are overstressed and misconstrued. Religious leaders have re-enforced this vice, especially the evangelicals/fundamentalists. The teaching has been one-sided: female submission without man's love.

Other organizations observed that in some churches, women and men sat on separate sides of the church during prayer services.

Like cultural ideologies, religious beliefs on gender relations could be a subject for ideational negotiation in policy diffusion. Unlike cultural factors, religious positions could be harder to alter if they are based on written foundations of a faith. As observed above, depending on their doctrines and level of institutionalization, religious groups could fall on a continuum of liberalist to dogmatic disposition on matters of gender relations. While cultural values and ideas are amenable to education and ideational repositioning, the religious beliefs are often more entrenched in scriptural code and could be inflexible (of course unless one quits one's religion

for another). However, like cultural ideas, religious doctrines are relatively dynamic and, even when codified, their interpretations could be modified to suit times and spaces. Even the doctrinal Catholic Church has evolved in its teachings over the centuries.

### ***6.3.3. Key Observations about Government and TNAs' Responses***

Zambia, like many African countries, has passed domestic legislation to promote gender equality and to enhance women's rights. In total, Zambia is party to 22 regional and international protocols on gender equality, including the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the United Nations' Conventions on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Rights of the Child (CRC) (National Gender Policy, 2014 – revised version of NGP of 2000). Zambia also has several pieces of legislation and policy documents that support its institutional commitment to the promotion of gender equality and the enhancement of women's rights. In 2000, long before the passage of the Anti-Gender Based Violence Act of 2011, Zambia came up with the National Gender Policy which sought to draw a roadmap to the realization of MDG 3. Even earlier, in 1989 Zambia passed the Interstate and Succession Act to structure property rights among couples in the event of death. Zambia also has the Gender Equity and Equality Act of 2015 that, among others, entitles women to their own bodies, e.g., to be free to make decisions about contraception without spousal approval.

In addition to being party to multiple treaties and protocols and having a plethora of legislation and policies, Zambia has received overwhelming TNA support to promote gender balance and women's rights. For example, the European Union and the United Nations, through their partner organizations, are spending a significant portion of the 500 million Euros meant for

the Sub-Saharan Spotlight Project to eliminate violence against women and girls on Zambia.<sup>55</sup>

The European Union are spending 25 million Euros to fight gender-based violence and sexual violence in Luapula and Northern Provinces (EU, 2018). Other TNA funders to the country target strategic areas of ideational change and policy influence, mainly HIV programs (PEPFAR, CDC, UNAIDS), education (UNICEF, EU, DFID), and engagement with traditional leaders, church leaders, and community leaders to transform traditional ideas (UNDP, USAID, UNICEF, EU). As a representative from a government ministry emphasized,

We have put in place necessary legal frameworks to support domestication (of the CEDAW and the CRC). We are inviting the international community to join hands with us in this effort; e.g. we are fighting child marriage; we've outlawed it and we are taking a multi-sectoral approach to educate communities and to win support from traditional leaders, church leaders, and the community.

Collaboratively, the Zambian government, its international partners, and NGOs have acknowledged the weakness of a singular political institutional approach to the promotion of women's welfare and gender equality in Zambia. To achieve MDG 3, these partners collectively split their resources beyond legislative efforts. For example:

In education, the EU works with five CSOs to improve learning conditions for girls [...]. Many girls stop attending school, e.g., when having periods when sanitary conditions are poor. Our NGO partners are working to ensure that girls have suitable conditions to remain in school. This was a huge support to improving the numbers of girls staying in school and completing school – e.g. sinking boreholes for water; providing low cost training materials. In Health, the health component was an important part of MDG 3. Accelerating neonatal services – targeting under 5 children to ensure survival of healthy girl children. In addition, the involvement of men in supporting their female partners helped in attaining MDG 3. Still under health, the EU supported the scaling up nutrition project involving the private sector, government agricultural extension officers (for crop production), and ministry officials for policy direction: we employed a coalition approach. The MDG was attained through complementarities of efforts.

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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/spotlight-initiative/>, accessed 8/17/2018.

In recognition that the idea of gender equality, though with inherent universal value and import, is of foreign origin, NGOs and TNAs worked together to strategically spin the idea to seek ideational buy-in and avoid resistance.

#### **6.4. Gender and Ideational Processes in Zambia**

There are important derivatives from the data. Figure 6.2. above shows the intricate web of spheres that contribute towards individuals' actions in their gender relations. Factors reflected in Figure 6.2 indicate the ranking of influential factors. While formal institutions are key among these factors, participants reveal that social structures, ideals, values, and norms, followed by religion, and then institutions, pattern gender relations. This re-enforces the three-step approach to ideational policy diffusion suggested in Chapter 3. Since the gender inequality experience is predominantly characterized by entrenched social factors, it is important to analyze what this means for policy diffusion. While the human rights approach is dominant at the transnational level, TNAs have visibly approached the diffusion of gender norms differently in Zambia. Gender equality policy proposers have learned the entrenched communitarian nature of the Zambian society that is largely impermissible to individuality. From the data, it can be argued that the human rights approach taken in gender policy is communitarian, where women's well-being has been narrated as communal well-being and not the elevation of the women folk to claiming individuality. The "He-for-She" campaign funded by several TNAs through the UNDP and Ministry of Gender is illustrative of this factor.<sup>56</sup> As Shutte (1993: 46) argues, the *ubuntu* philosophy that so characteristically defines the African society celebrates the philosophy that "a

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<sup>56</sup> In 2015, the United Nations Women Movement for Gender Equality, at the African Union summit in South Africa, appointed President Lungu as the promoter for the He-for-She campaign in recognition of the Zambian governments' exceptional performance in gender welfare through fighting child marriages and the promotion as well as appointing of women into key positions in various sectors.

person is a person through other persons”. Popularly known as African humanism, *ubuntu* is premised on the idea that “I am because we are” as opposed to the West-centric individualist predisposition. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 8, the individual human rights approach is an abstraction of the Western experience and cannot necessarily become universal, nor is it necessary for the realization of gender equality policies around the world.

We can, therefore, conclude that, despite the continued problems of gender inequality, TNAs have effectively employed strategies that are addressing the core of gender inequality in Zambia. A practical example is where TNAs, working with the government, have built networks with traditional leaders to educate and engage their subjects about the value of educating girls. As a result, traditional leaders (not the police) have taken the lead to withdraw under-age girls from marriages in rural areas. The government did not only adopt the policy for re-admission of young mothers into schools, it has also worked to change the ideas, beliefs, and truths that support child marriages. Therefore, TNAs have an effective niche to continue to make significant inroads towards a significant ideational revolution about gender relations in the country. Most importantly, these approaches are collective among key partners (government, NGOs, churches, INGO, and international state actors).

## 6.5. Disability Policy Diffusion Processes in Zambia

**Table 6.3. Disability Policy Participants**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Categorization</i>
<i>Special Hope Foundation</i>	TNA
<i>UN Agency 1</i>	TNA
<i>UN Agency 2</i>	TNA
<i>Leonard Cheshire Disability</i>	TNA
<i>SOS Children's Village</i>	TNA
<i>German Organization</i>	TNA
<i>Norwegian Organization</i>	TNA
<i>Canadian Researcher</i>	TNA
<i>Coalition of Donors</i>	TNA
<i>Albinism Foundation of Zambia</i>	DPO
<i>Human Rights Commission</i>	Government
<i>Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection</i>	NGO
<i>Disability Rights Watch</i>	DPO
<i>Zambia Federation of Disability Organizations</i>	DPO
<i>Zambia Agency for Persons with Disability</i>	Government
<i>St. Mathias Mulumba</i>	Catholic School
<i>N=</i>	<b>16</b>

## 6.6. Data Presentation – Disability

The TNA approaches to gender policy diffusion are contrasted with those of disability policy diffusion. For the disability segment of the study, I interviewed a total of 16 participants. Table 6.4. below represents the nodes assigned to the various themes that emerged during the interviews. It also shows how many of the participants believed in each coded theme and the frequency they referenced the idea in the interview process irrespective of the question they were answering at the time. The fact that an idea keeps arising during discussions signifies its importance on the subject matter of concern. Most prominently, discussions compared how significantly social norms impacted on the experience of disability against policy diffusion

measures employed by TNAs and the government to create a better experience for persons living with disabilities. First, I asked participants what they thought about the strength of existing institutions governing disability policy in the country. An overwhelming 93.7 percent said institutions were weak. However, about 63 percent of the same respondents said there were good institutions except the implementation was poor. Logically, it therefore made sense that the bulk of TNA and government effort in bettering the experience of persons with disabilities was targeted at institutional and legislative reforms and sharpening of policy instruments. This logic, however, fell apart when 93.7 percent of participants said the biggest challenge with disability in the country were social norms, religious beliefs, and family fears and myths, and only 37.5 percent said TNAs devoted their resources to addressing these adverse societal factors. Figure 6.3. below illustrates these variations in the TNAs and government approaches to policy diffusion. It was also revealing that the importance of social factors as the primary source of problems persons with disabilities face was repeated 144 times, representing 21.9 percent of total references of coded themes, compared to only 70 times that respondents spoke about weak institutions representing 10 percent share of references of coded themes. A key United Nations specialized agency remarked:

There are a lot of cultural barriers to disability rights. People still spit in armpits when they see an albino.<sup>57</sup> There is not enough information about what disability really is. Society still relies on myths and hearsay. There are also not enough role models among disabled people who could help to demystify disability. Currently, albinos are being killed for traditional healing purposes,<sup>58</sup> and for business, and the government is not taking this as an opportunity to educate society.

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<sup>57</sup> Zambians believe that a person who sees a person with albinism will themselves bear an albino child. However, if they spit in their armpits, they drive away the bad luck for such an occurrence. Naturally, therefore, persons with albinism are not welcome in all spaces and, even if they wanted to, the sense of rejection prevents them from socializing.

<sup>58</sup> In a 2017 report, the United Nations estimated that since 2000, about 80 people with albinism had been killed in Tanzania alone for their body parts. Beyond Zambia, many African societies believe that body parts of persons with albinism possess mystical powers for enhancing business performance and wealth creation. As a result, persons with albinism are frequently attacked for body parts amputation. During this study's interviews, a leader of the Albinism Foundation of Zambia gave a testimony of a case that was at the time live: "recently, there was a grave robbery

Given such information and the statistics above, the TNAs' eminent focus on diffusing transnational norms through political institutions through human rights instruments premised on the CRPDs' demand for rights of persons with disability raises serious conceptual concerns. Do TNAs hope, perhaps, to alter social factors through political institutions? From the data, an overwhelming 75 percent of participants observed that, despite the efforts to ramp up legislation, there was weak political will to change the experience of persons with disabilities. In the gender section above, we saw how participants believed that policy makers, as products of the society with its norms, are unlikely going to act against social norms they believe in unless the whole society embarks on normative change processes. A key United Nations agency bemoaned the lack of basic information about the prevalence of disability in the country:

The country does not have current comprehensive statistics on disability. The last survey was done in 2007 and it has not even yet been published. We have no official data on which to base programming. Without data, how could you even begin to address the problems of people with disabilities. Except for the Ministry of Education making significant efforts in mainstreaming disability, very little has been done in the sector.

The Human Rights Commission, a key government organ that monitors government's compliance with its constitutional and international human rights obligations noted that implementation was poor, arguing that the government lacked political will and that politicians did not see the need to worry about an electorally insignificant section of society like persons with disabilities:

Zambia ratified the CRPD in 2010; in 2012, it enacted the Persons with Disabilities Act; in 2015, it came up with the National Disability Policy. What is lacking is the actual implementation and enforcement. What we see is that even the political engagement model is poorly executed – very laissez faire attitude from the government.

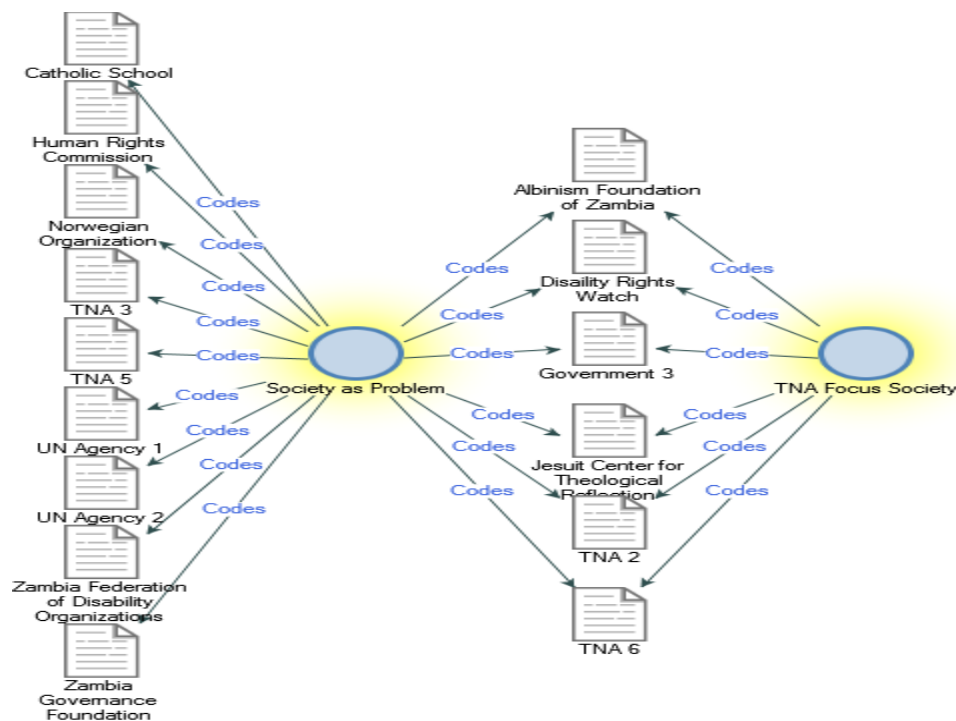
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where the remains of an albino were stolen for business use. We have a recent case in Chipata, Eastern Zambia, where Miriam Kumwenda was attacked by people she knows. Her breast was cut out. Unfortunately, the real architects are never arrested, only agents are." I had the honor and challenging fortune to meet with Miriam in person at a safe house where the foundation hides victims for protection from further harm.



This data reveals important highlights significant for a comparative analysis of TNA engagement in disability policy diffusion approaches and their approaches in gender policy diffusion. The social and ideological similarities between the two policy areas and the contrasts of TNAs' approaches are theoretically intriguing. In the next section, as I continue to engage the data, I present a detailed discussion of the Zambian social context, drawing on the variables highlighted in Table 6.4. I then discuss TNA and government responses and their implications for transnational policy diffusion.

**Figure 6.3. Diagrammatic Comparative of Respondents' Assessment of Influence of social norms against their conviction of Resource Focus on Ideational Change**



*Source: Field data*

**Table 6.4.**  
Disability Policy  
Diffusion  
Codebook

Node Name	Description	Sources	References	Percentage Share of Sources (n=16)	Percentage Share of References (n=659)
DPO Fragmented		7	18	43%	2.7%
Institution Weak	Includes weak political will and lack of good laws	15	70	93.7%	10%
Laws lacking or weak		11	22	68.8%	
Political will weak		12	48	75%	
Institutions OK	Includes strong political will and strong laws and policies	11	27	68.8%	
Laws ok		10	24	62.5%	
Political will ok		3	3	18.8%	
Society as Problem	This includes stigma, family socialization, and religious views and interpretations	15	144	93.7%	21.9%
Socialization	Values, norms, beliefs, myths.	15	71	93.7%	
Religion		9	16	56%	
Stigma	Myths, discrimination, attitudes, socialized 'truths'.	14	57	87.5%	
TNA Focus Institutions	Includes concentration on projects finance, services, legislation, and government policy	15	76	93.7%	11.7%

Laws and policies	13	38	81.3%	
Project support	6	13	37.5%	
Services	12	24	75%	
TNA Focus Society	6	8	37.5%	1.2%

*Source: NVivo coding of key themes*

## 6.7. Contextualizing What the Data Says and How the Government and TNAs Respond

### 6.7.1. Context and Traditional Concepts

Although there is a wide disparity in the available statistics of persons with disability, Zambia experiences high levels of disability in its population. According to a study conducted by the Norwegian Research Organization SINTEF in 2006, 13.1 percent of Zambians live with disabilities (Eide and Loeb, 2006).<sup>59</sup> The national census of 2010 put the figure at 2 percent while the National Disability Survey of 2015 by the Central Statistical Office and the University of Zambia indicates a disability prevalence of 7.2 percent (UN, 2016). According to the World Health Organization estimates, there are two million Zambians living with disabilities, the equivalent of 15 percent of the population (ILO PROPELL Report, 2015).<sup>60</sup> Several TNAs attributed the lack of progress in disability policy in Zambia to incoherent and unreliable statistics.

In a country-wide study done by the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) in 2017, major challenges facing persons with disabilities include poor access to the physical environment, stigma, and exclusionary policies in health and transportation. These challenges

<sup>59</sup> SINTEF, *Living Conditions among People with Activity Limitations in Zambia: A National Representative Study*, 2006. Available from <http://www.sintef.no/globalassets/upload/helse/levekar-og-tjenester/zambialcweb.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS\\_240550/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_240550/lang--en/index.htm), accessed 8/24/2018.

were repeated many times during the interviews. The Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Zambia's statutory body responsible for promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, registering and delivering services to them, advising on disability issues and mainstreaming disability in all aspects of national development, noted the inequitable access to healthcare, education, employment as well as entrenched social discrimination based on myths and religious beliefs. In her report to the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities named nine major challenges facing persons with disabilities in Zambia: stigma and discrimination; accessibility; participation of persons with disabilities; access education; lack of work and employment; poor social protection; poor access to health services; deprivation of liberty, denial of legal capacity and forced treatment; and inequitable access to justice. While all these are important factors for disability policy, particularly for policy diffusion by TNAs, based on the data I argue that the mere changing of policy instruments would not resolve them. Instead, it is a shift in fundamental ideas and social definitions, which would frame relationships between persons with disabilities and the rest of society, that would engender change. The fact that the multiplicity of policies, laws, treaties and regulations has not addressed these challenges re-enforces the participants' claim that the problem is largely non-institutional. Therefore, following the revelations of the data, I seek to highlight those social factors responsible for perceptions of persons with disability that change of policy instruments alone cannot address.

#### ***6.7.2. Social Factors Affecting Disability in Zambia***

In her 2017 Report on Zambia after her country visit, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on disability rights said she received multiple allegations of children and adults with

disabilities being confined at home by their relatives owing to the belief that they were cursed, and of mothers giving birth to children with disabilities being abandoned or divorced by their husbands owing to misconceptions and stigma attached to impairment. She also reported that traditional and cultural beliefs play a significant role in the way impairment is perceived in Zambian society. Of the few respondents that said they had adopted a mixed approach to disability policy influence in Zambia, one TNA remarked: “we also challenge church leaders about their memberships. Where are disabled people/children in your churches? If not any present, something is wrong [...] they could be hiding them. We ask pastors to challenge their membership about disability and about not concealing their families with disabilities”. One interviewee narrated how her best friend and her family in Zambia had concealed the death of their disabled teen-child whom they hurriedly buried without notifying friends and relatives.

Asked what they thought about the influence of culture and social perceptions on persons with disabilities in Zambia, over 90 percent of respondents said disability has traditionally been associated with misfortune or punishment on the family, caused by ancestral spirits, witchcraft, or God. Many, particularly organizations implementing TNA programs, including a Catholic school for children with disabilities, noted that most children with disabilities come from single-parent homes because husbands immediately seek divorce when a child is born with a disability. The justification is commonly that the wife cheated on the husband, or she did something else she should not have done during pregnancy. An American organization running several schools for children with intellectual disabilities in Lusaka stated that

disability is always blamed on something, mostly the mother did something wrong during pregnancy. Most of our children come from broken homes because husbands abandon their wives when they beget a disabled child. This compounds the situation. We can't hire the moms, they come for help. They are deserted, left to be helpless.

Owing to these beliefs, many persons with disabilities are discriminated against and are excluded from their communities and society, considered to be incapable of carrying out daily activities. A major United Nations specialized agency supporting disability work in Zambia observed that stigma was deep and that it was not an isolated problem but socialized. The Zambia Governance Foundation, an amalgamation of international donors working on improving governance in Zambia, has a robust funding toward disability programming in Zambia and it conducts national-wide trainings on disability. The foundation's representative, asked to comment on the major challenge facing disability in Zambia, said:

Our beliefs about what causes disability have an impact on what people with disabilities think about themselves, and about their abilities. Our beliefs also affect how we treat the disabled. From ZGF's interactions with the general population during training sessions, these beliefs are not limited to rural areas but are prevalent and strong in the general populace. There is always a "aha" moment when talking to people about disability, i.e. revelation of some misperception and/or beliefs about disability. Our trainings reveal that society in general is prejudiced. There are such beliefs as disabled people are incomplete creatures, or their parents did something wrong prior to or during pregnancy.

Commenting on stigma and socialized beliefs about disability, a head teacher of a school for children with disabilities remarked:

A lot of people who pass by our school are visibly scared of the children. Some people even think disability is contagious. For example, a lot of people fear epileptic patients; there are a lot of myths about epilepsy and that it is contagious. For example, there is the belief that if you meet the saliva of a patient, you too become epileptic. As a result, people stay away from patients and sometimes run away when a patient faces an attack. Parents think their children's disability will worsen when their children are taken into school away from family care. As a result, they prevent their children from socialization.

Almost all respondents mentioned the fearful belief that they would potentially have an albino child if they looked at an albino person. Consequently, Zambian children are taught to look away when an albino person is passing. At the same time, they are supposed to spit saliva in their armpits to chase "bad luck" from themselves and their families.

Social factors about disability in Zambia have spelled out serious, sometimes tragic, outcomes for persons with disabilities. A respondent from the Albinism Foundation of Zambia, asked about the experience of persons with disabilities in Zambia, reported growing physical attacks on persons with albinism. At the time of the interview, there was an active case of a woman whose hand had been cut-out by known community members. It is believed that body parts of albinos possess mystical powers for wealth enhancement or for business affluence. The leader of the Albinism Foundation of Zambia said:

There is rampant discrimination and mistreatment. They call us all sorts of derogatory names. Even the acceptable names for albinos are derogatory: e.g. in Chichewa – *Chidangwaleza*, i.e. a thing, a creature. In Malawi, they call us *Napwere*, i.e., a ghost. These social perceptions and myths have consequences for us. In Zambia, for instance, we have seen a surge in the number of physical attacks and killings of people with albinism for fetish and witchcraft purposes. Zambia is neighbors with Malawi and Tanzania, both of which have very high records of killings of albinos for superstitious purposes. This has led to the surge in the attacks in Zambia too, sometimes to meet the market demands of the neighboring countries. In Kuomboka at our offices, we have a refuge house where we house survivors of these attacks. The government has not moved in to intervene in the killings. Those that are arrested, their cases die a natural death with no successful convictions.

Social stigma also has the potential to impact persons with disabilities' access to other basic services, such as health care, adequate housing, and education. In fact, several respondents to disability questions during this study said it was common knowledge that children with disability are stopped from attending school by their families due to shame and inaccessibility. Some respondents observed that parents of non-disabled children withdrew their children from school in preference for other schools if a child with a disability was enrolled in the same class as their child.

I asked representatives of gender-based organizations if their programs that had worked so well in promoting the welfare of women in the country had any inclusion of women and girls with disabilities. None had any such programming. Reading the Gender Policy of 2014 and the

Strategic Plan for Gender 2014-2016, I found that neither document refers to children and adults with disabilities. Admitting this omission, the Minister of Gender and Child Development, during a meeting with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on disability rights promised that the government would close the gap in future documents.<sup>61</sup> Despite this blindness to the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities, and the special societal circumstances that enhance their disadvantage and inequality, there is overwhelming evidence that such programming is needed. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on disability rights highlighted this evidence in her report:

Women and girls with disabilities, particularly those of low economic status, also face numerous barriers in enjoying their rights. The Special Rapporteur was informed about the alarming situation of street children with disabilities, especially blind and deaf girls, who are exposed to abuse and are often excluded from programs targeting survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Moreover, women and girls with disabilities in general are at heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence and of contracting HIV/AIDS, owing to existing beliefs that having sexual intercourse with persons with a disability — who are often viewed as virgins and asexual — can cure the virus. The State must act to protect women and girls with disabilities against all forms of violence and ensure their access to justice on an equal basis with others.

Finally, I asked participants about the role of the media in changing or enhancing negative perceptions about disability in the country. A respondent from a United Nations agency argued that the media had been part of the problem. Commenting on the media reports about the killings of albinos, the representative said,

the media should not report killings as if they were entertainment – the media should educate people – why are the killings taking place? Why they are wrong? A story about a blind person beating another person can re-enforce the stereotype that blind people have bad temperaments, or it can educate people about blindness and discrimination. We have not done enough as a society to teach children what disability is.

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<sup>61</sup> See Special Rapporteur's 2017 Report to the Human Rights Council on Zambia.



The United Nation's Special Rapporteur, in her 2017 report, also observed the lack of involvement of public and private media in campaign efforts to change the perception of disability in Zambian society, while they sometimes contribute to strengthening stigma.

The evidence that disability problems in Zambia are underpinned by social factors is overwhelming. Several organizations remarked how these cultural ideas about disability are carried through religious beliefs among citizens. Pentecostal pastors who preach about sin, often attribute bad luck and misfortune in families, including disability, to sin and offer exorcist services. I now turn to presenting findings about TNAs and government responses to these factors.

### ***6.7.3. TNA and Government Interventions in Disability***

As revealed in the data sets above, in response to its international obligations through various treaties and protocols, the Zambian government has adopted several legislative and policy measures for disability. In 2010, Zambia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Prior to that, Zambia passed the Persons with Disabilities Act of 1996 which it upgraded in 2012. The 2012 Persons with Disabilities Act seeks to domesticate the United Nation's CRPD. Zambia has also ratified most of the core international and regional human rights treaties, as enumerated in the gender section above. In addition, the Bill of Rights in Part III of the Constitution provides for the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms. The 2016 amended Constitution mentions disability as one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination in article 23, a significant contribution to strengthening the protection system for persons with disabilities.

In addition to its international obligations, Zambia also has multiple important policies and strategic plans to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. In 2015, Zambia adopted the National Policy on Disability and the National Implementation Plan on Disability. DPOs and TNAs supporting disability work commended the government for its broad consultation with DPOs in the drafting process of these documents. Through the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities, the government certifies citizens with disabilities for services and benefits, primarily through the social cash transfer scheme originally designed in 2003 for poor households under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare. Through its National Social Protection Policy of 2014, which considers disability as one of its main pillars, Zambia has continued to expand its coverage of the social cash transfer scheme and other funds for persons with disabilities. In 2017, Zambia reached a coverage of 78 districts spending over 23 million dollars<sup>62</sup> from an initial 23 districts and 7 million dollars in 2003. Although participants bemoaned the lack of coordination among government ministries in implementing the provisions of the National Policy on Disability, a United Nations agency noted that the government had started initiatives to rectify the gap. The United Nations' representative said,

Recently, an important disability discourse started at Permanent Secretary level for all government ministries. We held a PS breakfast where we discussed the communication strategy and how it will target cultural barriers. There is an effort to place focal points in all ministries. These will all be at director level to maximize their authority and impact. We learnt from the gender focal point strategy that less senior representatives have minimal leverage and impact within ministries. These will undergo intensive disability quality training.

In its Seventh National Development Plan, the document that should benchmark its national development trajectory, Zambia aims to promote inclusive growth and significantly reduce hunger and poverty and to include disabilities in all its programs.

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<sup>62</sup> All dollar values are denominated in United States dollars.

Despite these commendable legislative and policy commitments from the Zambian government, several respondents regretted the lack of implementation of these policy commitments. In his article about policy paradigm change in Sub-Saharan Africa, Lascoumes (2006) stresses the significance of policy implementation in the explanation of Hall's (1993) three orders of change. Lascoumes (2006) highlights both the relevance of Hall's (1993) approach for the analysis of policy change in Sub-Saharan Africa and the need to pay close attention to the implementation of these policies to understand whether change is real or simply a "smokescreen" where the new ideas put forward by experts and policymakers do nothing to alter practices and outcomes on the ground (Béland et al., 2019, upcoming). Most organizations spoken to in this study said the Zambian government had done little to implement its international commitments and its well-spelled out policy plans. A representative from an American Organization working with children with disabilities remarked:

Lots of talk, no implementation! Zambia is failing its citizens. The ministry of health needs to be teaching its personnel how to handle people with disabilities. The doctors mis-prescribe drugs, e.g., Panadol <sup>63</sup> for a complex problem. The medical personnel don't care about disability. Ministry of education ill-trains teachers --- they have no clue how to teach and handle children with disabilities. Professors don't know enough to teach teachers; government has no strategy for approaching these two policy areas. If these two were addressed, a lot would change. We are having to retrain government trained teachers. Teachers come here with degrees but have no idea how to handle real situations. No practical knowledge.

While there is a gap between treaty/policy commitments and real pragmatic implementation in the disability sphere, what exists is primarily tailored towards the expansion of rights and improvement of legislation. A representative from a funding agency representing several western donor organizations and embassies put it very succinctly:

The main goal is to advocate for inclusive services [...]. The way to arrive at this is to develop strong legislation that supports the needs of persons with disabilities. This

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<sup>63</sup> Panadol (also known as Paracetamol), the equivalent of Tylenol or Alive in North America, is a common over-the-counter pain-killer in southern Africa.

agenda is particularly pushed by donors, particularly Nordic countries like the Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway. Our country, as a result has very modern legislation inspired by outside pressure but with little or no accompanying mindset in government or public about disability. Our mindsets still haven't changed to accepting the human rights approach to disability. We are fixated at the traditional model (beliefs, myths, social perceptions, etc.) as well as the medical model. The disability act is a good representation of international principles, but it has not settled in our mindsets yet.

Other programs targeted the promotion of inclusiveness in education and in the training of teachers to build capacity to handle children with disabilities in their schools. There was only one program funded by the Norwegian government on community-based rehabilitation (CBR) that stressed community engagement, but it was an isolated case and quite divided between institutional and community engagement in only one out of ten provinces in Zambia. Major TNAs confessed that they had not started to engage with traditional leaders or churches to reverse socialized ideas about disability. ILO was in the process of beginning to pilot a project with chiefs in the northern part of the country. Other TNAs like the Leonard Cheshire Foundation, for example, support the charity model by funding facilities that provide shelter and care for children with disabilities. To their credit, the international community, through ILO and other partners, are beginning to help build capacity in the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disability to structurally mainstream disability in different government policies.

## **6.8. Discussion**

The above data sets on the two policy areas are revealing. First, we see that while the promotion of gender equality was central to feminist TNA's objectives, persuading endogenous ideational factors was equally important. The most notable intermediaries TNAs and local organizations engaged to transform social norms were traditional leaders, teachers, religious leaders, and husbands. Several participants observed that campaign messages were vehemently aired on

national television, private radio stations, and in the print media. During field work, I observed two half day events where theatre groups performed scenes of gender-based violence, its implications for family unity and growth of children, and legal consequences. The strategic scheduling of these events on Saturdays and their locations at shopping malls symbolizes the intention to catch public attention. Several respondents also pointed that such events were common in schools to influence the mindsets of young people differently from what they learned and saw in their homes. These factors were characteristically crucial in the diffusion of the norms of gender equality in Zambia. The data shows that TNAs and their partners used framing techniques to persuade ideational, cultural, and knowledge leaders toward alternative frames of gender relations. This helped, prior to the attainment of effective institutional frameworks, in altering entrenched societal ideas held in belief systems and practices that placed women at the periphery. Using Hall's (1993) framework of three orders of policy change, one could argue that gender policy change in Zambia is moving towards the third level of change where not merely policy instruments have changed, but the very ideas and principles of policy actors (both political and societal) that define and undergird gender relations are changing.

The same, however, cannot be said about TNAs in the disability policy area. While acknowledging the importance of social factors on the experience of disability, TNAs have decided to focus their attention on political institutional engagement. The data on gender relations and disability policy establishes three critical derivatives. First and most importantly, this data teaches us that institutions are not just formal rules and regulations but also informal norms that largely determine whether a social group would rationally adhere to codified precepts. Institutions, therefore, cannot be created by the transfer of policy ideas without addressing the informal factors that justify why people act as they do. Second, that it is important to study the

origins of policy ideas to determine how they will impact policy domains away from their origins. The data indicates that transnationalization without adequate socialization and rationalization, as in the case of disability policy diffusion in Zambia, is likely to face ideological hurdles that must be addressed prior to institutionalization. Third, TNAs, working with local partners, must identify critical domestic actors well positioned to sell their ideational frames to alter entrenched norms. The reason is that social values are not always amenable to formal institutional persuasion alone. As the data evidences, the observable gender inequalities in the Zambian society have their sources not in the lack of political institutional solutions or legislation. Rather, social ideologies, often acceptable to women and supported by women themselves, define gender relations in Zambia.

The fact that traditional ideas play such a significant role in normative formation of both educated and non-educated Zambians indicates there is room for the deployment of framing strategies to negotiate those ideas. Clearly, imposition of ideational frames through legislation has shown to be ineffective. While Zambian academics like Habasonda (2002) argue that the imposition of foreign ideas about women's rights destabilize family values, I argue that: (i) social learning is inevitable in the global society, and (ii) that ideational and policy diffusion, rather than being seen as imposition, should take a conciliatory approach to persuade rather than conquer the other's ideas that could fundamentally define one's ontological position. These arguments have important ramifications for policy diffusion theory-building. Indeed, "puzzling" and "powering" are co-joined principles whose balance should be managed in policy diffusion to avoid ideational backlashes, resistance, and undue ideational asymmetries that leave one's ideational position 'defeated' rather than 'evolved'. In the example of gender equality and the pursuit of MDG 3, policy actors attempted to negotiate domestic ideas through socialization,

rationalization, and eventual institutionalization. In 2015, TNAs began to fund fast track courts in Zambia to expedite the delivery of justice in gender-based violence cases, a measure that augments widespread education initiatives for ideational transformation. Considering the similarities in how participants weight the influence of social factors on both disability and gender relations against institutional factors, it is important that disability -focused policy diffusion TNAs and their local partners draw lessons from the strategies adopted by their counterparts in gender policy entrepreneurship.

## **CHAPTER 7: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TRANSNATIONAL GENDER AND DISABILITY NORMS DIFFUSION IN MALAWI**

### **7.0. Introduction**

This chapter is the second case study of this dissertation. While Chapter 6 focused on Zambia, this chapter focuses on Malawi. For coherence purposes, I follow the structure laid out in Chapter 6. I begin with TNAs' work in the gender policy area and then move to the disability policy domain. Methodologically, this chapter is based on empirical data gathered from two sources: field interviews (n=24) and document content analysis. The data was gathered between April 18 and August 30. I tried to balance participant representation between the two policy areas as shown in Tables 7.1. and 7.2. below. Unlike Zambia, Malawi presented significant accessibility challenges. More than half of those first contacted for interviews either did not respond or, if they did, turned down interview requests. Others gave conditions to meet for shorter than desired periods of time. This was common especially with local partner organizations implementing TNAs' projects. In some cases, a supervisor would ask their technical subordinates to meet with me, but the subordinates would not always confirm meetings. Between the two policy areas, this was more the case with disability than with gender policy participants. Fellow researchers I met in the field from other parts of the world shared similar experiences. Due to these challenges, I conducted some of the interviews beyond the scheduled period via voice calls on WhatsApp and on the telephone.

Due to time constraints, in Malawi, I recruited a local research assistant to help schedule interviews as well as to conduct some of the interviews. Appendix J details the distribution of interviews between him and me. The research assistant was a recent university graduate from the University of Malawi in Agricultural Economics. Although he was already a skilled researcher, I



gave him a short training in qualitative interviewing, stressing the processes of obtaining informed consent. Several interviews in Malawi, as indicated in Appendix J, were conducted in Chichewa and then translated into English before transcription. Since both my assistant and I are proficient speakers of Chichewa, we had no difficulty translating the original interviews into English. Interview notes, and audio recordings were transcribed into word documents on which thematic coding was based. All transcriptions, except for the WhatsApp and telephone interviews, took place while in the field. Listening to audio recordings, I adjusted the transcriptions accordingly. In a few instances, I emailed participants while transcribing to clarify a point made during the discussions. Using NVivo, following Braun and Clarke's (2014) concept of thematic analysis, I coded the data into thematic nodes that dominated the discussions. My coding process did not necessarily follow the question format. I then ran several queries with nodes to generate comparatives.

My data analysis, based both on thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2014) and on content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), was driven by a set of objectives that I address in the two parts of each section. First, like in Zambia, I wanted to find out what some of the prominent context-specific social factors about gender and disability in Malawi were. Second, I sought to understand how gender and disability activism balanced political institutional engagement and structural engagement. Third, I was interested to know what organizational factors came out as shortfalls of the gender/disability movements. Bearing all these factors in mind, I therefore wanted to critically assess differences between gender and disability policy work in Malawi from a transnational perspective.

This chapter is divided into two major sections: Gender policy diffusion in Malawi, and disability policy diffusion in Malawi. In the next section, I present the field data, followed by a

contextual analysis of the existing policy situations and the implications of the data on the TNAs' existing responses in both policy areas. In the discussion, I compare the TNA approaches taken in the two policy areas within the Malawian context.<sup>64</sup>

## **7.1. Gender Policy Diffusion Processes in Malawi**

### **7.2. Data Presentation**

According to the UNDP 2015 Malawi Human Development Index Report, women, despite having a higher life expectancy at birth, perform poorer than men in schooling and human development in general. According to the report, Malawian women have a human development value of 0.455 compared to their male counterparts with the human development value of 0.495 which results into the gender development index (GDI) value 0.921. Compared to Zambia, Malawian women, despite having higher life expectancy at birth, perform poorer in the GDI. These gender development gaps could also be differently expressed in gender inequality indices (GII) which, as we earlier saw in Chapter 6, measure gender-based inequalities in three dimensions of reproduction health, empowerment, and economic activity (UNDP, 2015). These three measures account for women's share of representation in parliament, the percentage of adult women who complete post-secondary education, maternal mortality rates and adolescent birth rates, and participation in the labor market, among others. In other words, the GII is the total loss in human development because of inequalities between female and male participation in the socio-economic life of society. In 2015, the UNDP GII ranked Malawi 145 out of 159 countries, while it ranked Zambia 124. In that year, Malawi's GII value was 0.614 compared to Zambia's 0.526.

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<sup>64</sup> Chapter 8 will constitute an inter-country level comparison between the two cases.

The UNDP statistics are in sync with the findings of this study. Participants in this study repeated factors attributed as contributing to high GII values for Malawi. The first question I asked participants was to tell me what they saw as the primary indicators of gender inequality in Malawi. Almost without exception, the participants mentioned imbalances in levels of literacy and participation in schools between girls and boys; the skewed representation in parliament and other public offices; denial of rights over means of production (e.g. land); several cultural factors

**Table 7.1. Gender Policy Participants**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Categorization</i>
<i>Islam and Women</i>	International Religious Organization
<i>Center for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education</i>	NGO
<i>GIZ</i>	TNA
<i>OXFAM</i>	TNA
<i>UNFPA</i>	TNA
<i>Center for Human Rights and Rehabilitation</i>	NGO
<i>Malawi Human Rights Commission</i>	Government
<i>Tilitonse Foundation</i>	TNA
<i>Church of Central Africa Presbyterian</i>	TNA
<i>Non-Governmental Organization Gender Coordination Coalition (NGOGCN)</i>	NGO
<b><i>N</i></b>	<b>10</b>
<b><i>Source: Field Data</i></b>	

such as *kulowa kufa* (i.e., wife inheritance), customary child marriage, and sexual cleansing; the right of passage performed through *Fisi* (hyena) where young girls are made to have sexual intercourse with elderly men to transform them into womanhood; and inequitable economic empowerment between men and women.

**Table 7.2. Gender Policy Diffusion Codebook**

Name	Description	Sources (N=10)	References	Percentage Representation (N=10)
Gender Equality Progress		8	10	
Excellent		0	0	
Intermediate		6	8	60%
Poor		2	2	20%
Good Institutions Exist		3	3	30%
Institutions Weak		8	15	80%
Implementation		8	15	80%
Poor				
Non-Existent		0	0	
Society Problematic	Includes attitudes, Religions, Beliefs, Culture, myths, etc.	10	55	100%
TNA Focus on Ideational Evolution or Revolution		8	32	80%
Churches, Communities, informal structures		8	28	
Traditional leaders		4	4	
TNA focus on Institutions		9	36	90%
Law and Policies		7	22	
Services	Includes institutional education, healthcare, sun creams, wheelchairs, etc.	8	14	

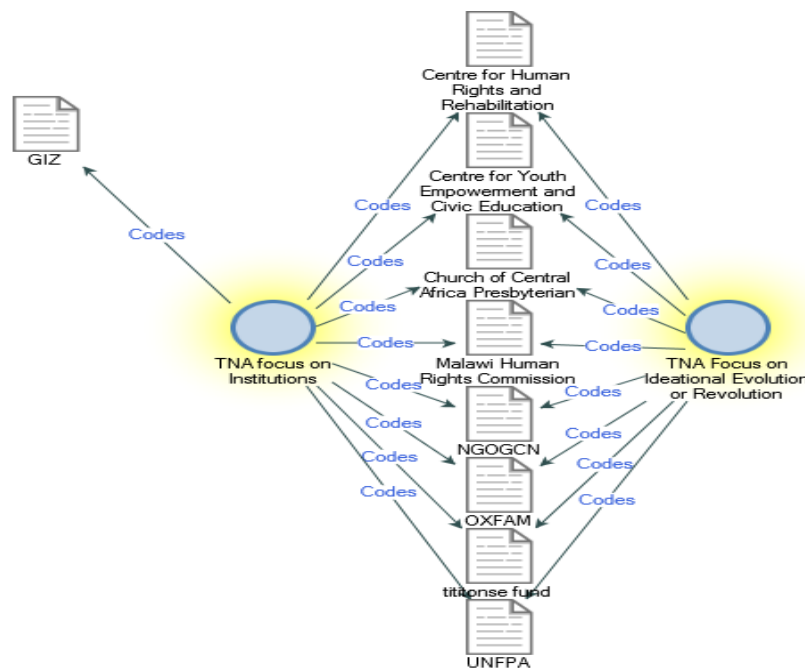
*Source: NVivo generation of data coding*

When I probed further to find out how they weighted social factors against institutional factors in these observations, all the participants suggested social factors were the dominant factors influencing gender inequalities. It is also important to note that this factor was the most referenced of all the coded thematic subjects from the interviews, standing at 55 with the closest only being referenced 36 times (See Table 7.2.). According to the data, 80 percent of participants believed that Malawi's policies and laws were not adequately implemented. When I asked them to compare the progress they had observed pre and post MDGs in gender relations towards the attainment of gender equality, 60 percent of participants said good progress had been made, citing increased participation of women in politics, incremental changes in male-female relations, the reduction in cultural practices such as wife inheritance, and the observable increase in women's economic empowerment in agriculture and on the general labor market. Moreover, 60 percent of participants graded this improvement neither as poor nor excellent but intermediate. These variations are depicted in the codebook in Table 7.2.

At this point, I asked how TNAs apportioned resources. First, both Table 7.2. and Figure 7.1. demonstrate that while 90 percent of respondents observed that TNAs devoted a large amount of resources to focusing on building institutions, 80 percent of them thought TNAs had focused enough resources towards programs seeking to engage communities on ideological, cultural, and belief changes on gender relations. The "50/50" nation-wide campaign was frequently mentioned. These findings are consistent with the TNAs' belief that institutions were weak and, therefore, accounted for poor gender relations, and that social factors were equally responsible for poor gender relations. According to Table 7.2. only 30 percent of participants thought institutions were strong and 100 percent thought social factors strongly influenced gender inequalities. Put differently, while 80 percent of participants observed that political

institutions were weak and inadequate to change gender inequality, 100 percent thought that social factors were significantly responsible for gender inequalities in Malawi.

**Figure 7.1. Diagrammatic Representation of Respondents' Assessment of TNA and Government Distribution of Resources between Competing Causal Factors**



*TNA focus on institution– 90%; TNA focus on ideational evolution – 80%*

*Source: NVivo coding*

The data also illustrates the differences in participants' observations regarding the strengths and weaknesses of institutions. A caveat here is that the “weak institutions” node represents both the lack of good institutions and the poor implementation or operationalization of existing institutions. The responsibility for coordinating and implementation of gender policies in the country is vested in the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MOGCDSW); the National AIDS Commission; the Ministry of Health HIV Unit; the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS; and various technical and sectoral working groups

(PEPFAR, 2016). Despite the government's and TNAs' efforts to strengthen its planning and coordination role, 80 percent of participants suggested that the MOGCDSW's leadership in gender, and its coordination with health and other sectors, remain inconsistent and further, that the ministry is severely under-resourced. These findings justify the distribution of TNAs' resources (80 social factors 90 institutional building) to advance the gender equality agenda. It is striking that respondents referenced these two factors (institutions and social factors) almost the same number of times: one 32, the other 36, signifying the symmetrical importance participants attached to these observations. The findings also justify why 60 percent of participants thought intermediate progress had been made in the promotion of gender equality, casting hope for greater achievements.

Participants observed the need for TNAs to support the strengthening of political institutions in Malawi to advance gender equality. Stressing the need to build institutions, participants observed TNAs' support to the government of Malawi in enhancing access to justice for women. For example, TNAs sponsored the "Will and Inheritance Act, which has helped resolve a lot of property grabbing issues" (TNA participant). They have also, to curb gender-based violence and to increase access to justice, funded programs being implemented in Chitipa, Mangochi and Dedza districts for several years.

Regarding TNAs engagement with social factors, prominent observations included engagement with traditional leaders to reverse trends of child marriage<sup>65</sup>, sexual cleansing and other practices that ideologically justified male dominance; community mobilization and education through organized groups; civic education; and empowerment of women to end their

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<sup>65</sup> Until February 2017 when Malawi amended its constitution, it was legal to marry a 15-year girl child with the consent of her parents. Although scrapped, the practice persists, especially that customarily, the practice is still acceptably normal.

dependency on men. In 2014, USAID included Malawi as one of 35 gender-based violence priority countries due to the high rates of child marriage in the country (USAID-Malawi).<sup>66</sup>

Some participants commented that traditional leaders had come up with by-laws that outlawed child marriage, wife inheritance, and property grabbing after the death of a husband, in addition to the intense civic education and ideological persuasion at the grassroots. Participants mentioned both religious beliefs and traditional customs as factors primarily supporting the justifications for male dominance. As one participant put it,

The main cultural challenge summed up is the patriarchal system of the Malawian society which regards women as “second-class citizens.” Due to this mindset, people find it hard to embrace the reality that women should enjoy equal benefits and entitlements as men. In addition, traditional practices such as wife inheritance and initiation ceremonies tend to infringe the rights of women. In some ceremonies such as the *Fisi* (hyena) girls are supposed to have sexual intercourse with a grown man to transform them to womanhood which can put them to risks of sexually transmitted infections aside from the fact that it is also a human right abuse.

Although the levels of success in transnational norms diffusion are different between Malawi and Zambia (see gender inequality indices above), like in Zambia, the data suggests that TNAs in Malawi, in coordination with NGOs, have struck an important equilibrium between the idea of gender equality as a transnational norm and domestic social-cultural ideas. In other words, to address an ideationally entrenched phenomenon like gender inequality, one needs to examine individual societies to understand the context-specifics that harm and disadvantage women and to start the revolution from there. This is an ideational and not a legislative revolution. In what follows, I present some of the findings about context-specific understandings about the status of gender equality in Malawi.

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<sup>66</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/malawi/fact-sheets/malawi-gender-equality-fact-sheet>; Accessed 9/2/2018.



### **7.3. Analysis: A Sociological Approach to Understanding Data**

#### ***7.3.1. Traditional Concepts of Gender Relations***

Like Zambia, Malawi is ethnolinguistically fractionalized although with less ethnic diversity. Malawi has 10 ethnic groups (compared to Zambia's 73) inhabiting the three regions of the country (Osei-Hwedie, 1998). The three dominant groups are the Tumbuka occupying the Northern region of the country, the Yao in the Southern, and the Chewa in the Central region (Osei-Hwedie, 1998). Like some Zambian tribal groups, Malawian ethnic groups are characterized by historical rivalries. Primarily, the "cleavage is between the Northern region on one hand, and the Central and Southern regions, on the other, and [it] is based upon tensions caused by regional imbalances, created in part by British colonialism, and perpetuated by the post-colonial governments" (Osei-Hwedie, 1998: 231). While the Central region has the most fertile soils and is the largest contributor to the economy, it also has the highest illiteracy levels in the country, contrasted with the North which, although poor in natural resources, has the best schools, and hence is dominant in the job market (Oei-Hwedie, 1998). The South, on the other hand, is the center of commercial and industrial activities (Malawi Country Report, Third Quarter 1994:28).

Regionalism in Malawi, which like in Zambia coincides with ethnic identities, has also served as a driver for cultural identity retention. Even when Malawians migrate to urban areas for education and employment, they retain strong cultural identities and norms. One of the fundamental areas of cultural expression is societal expectations in gender relations, especially in marriage. In an article on couples' decision-making and cultural scripts in Malawi, Mbweza et al., (2008) find that while women could influence decision outcomes in the home on specific issues in Malawi, men dominantly influence house-hold level decisions. According to the

findings of the research, several factors characterize household decision making processes between couples in Malawi. Mostly, these factors are based on traditional understandings of the status of a man and that of a woman both in marriage and in society. Prominent among the factors highlighted in Mbweza et al.'s (2008: 16) research for male dominance are:

- A husband is the leader/head of the family;
- Men do not do things wrongly;
- A man resolves conflict;
- Men are expected to initiate sex;
- The man has more power;
- The husband brings money into the home;
- The husband is the owner of the money.

On the other hand, justifications for women's submissiveness in male-female relations were:

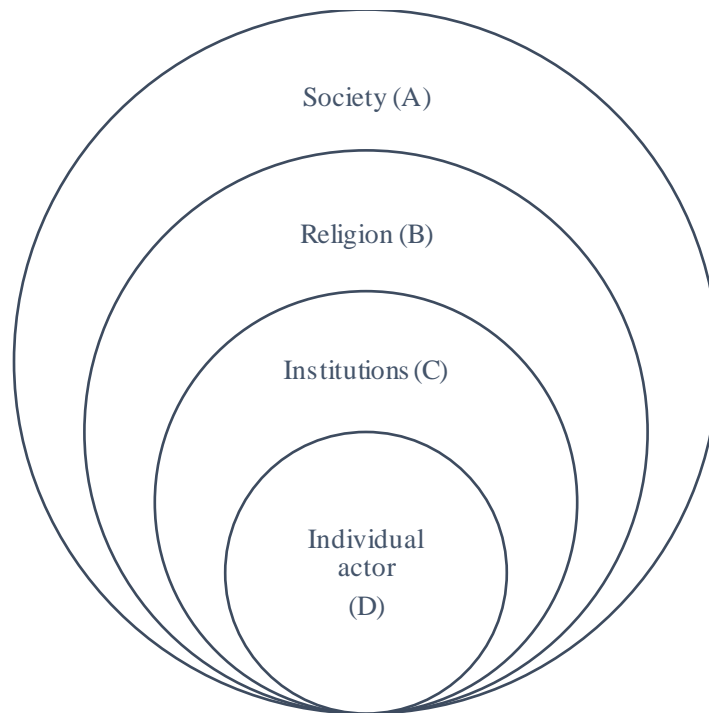
- Women should respect husband because God created them [husbands] first;
- A wife should accept defeat when there is a disagreement;
- A wife should apologize because she is the one proposed to;
- A woman who initiates sex is looked upon as a prostitute/bitch;
- The wife has to obey when the husband wants sex;
- A wife does not bring money into the home;
- Women misuse money.

Although participants insisted that cultural practices were more prevalent in rural areas, with 80 percent of Malawi's population residing in rural areas, it means that these practices are more the norm than the exception. As one TNA participant said during an interview,

Cultural norms are contributing more to gender imbalances since these are learned at an early stage, Malawi has good institutions and legal frameworks in promoting gender

equality and protecting women and girls' rights. But these good laws and institutions rarely work at community levels since they fail to suddenly leave aside their cultural beliefs, way of life, known to them throughout their lifetime for laws brought to them by a stranger.

**Figure 7.2. Locating Gender Inequality in the Malawi Society**



*Source: Abstraction from Data*

As Figure 7.2. shows, societal expectations, expressed through cultural values, beliefs, and customs indeed have a significant bearing on the understanding of male-female relations that any policy framework seeking to reduce GII ought to pay attention to. In fact, not all social customs and practices are amenable to legislative enforcement. While institutions can legislate against sexual harassment or physical abuse, similar legislative efforts to upset norms of who makes the first sexual advance in the bedroom would not only be impracticable, but also vacuous.

Reversing entrenched social norms, therefore, is more complex than prescribing institutional remedies. In Figure 7.1. above, we see how TNA and government distribute resources between

the societal and institutional factors in narrowing gender inequalities in Malawi. These distributions are in sync with the expected responses from the data.

### ***7.3.2. Religion and Gender Stereotypes***

Religious influence came out as a strong factor informing gender relations in Malawi. Although it has also been positively used as a means for changing gender norms through the influence of religious leaders, religion has played a significantly negative role in perpetuating stereotypes about women and their status in society. One participant, expressing an observation that was repeated many times, said:

Religion has also proved to be another challenge when advocating gender equality. Some religions prohibit women from some roles within the church. This limits the power of women and affects the societal view on the roles and capabilities of women. Since religion has a great impact on people's way of living, such beliefs create long-term impacts on how the communities view women and women's rights.

Another participant, echoing a frequent observation from other participants, noted:

Religious beliefs have [...] contributed to gender inequality. Since religious beliefs are [...] socially constructed, they tend to have long term effects on how people perceive issues of gender equality. Most religious beliefs undermine the roles and abilities of women.

When I asked a leader of a Mosque in Lilongwe to tell me about how Islam interprets gender balance, he said:

Women are not allowed to lead in a group where men are present; but they can lead or hold a position in an all-women gathering. A woman can preach in a mosque comprising men and women only if there is a curtain separating her from males in such a way that males can only hear her voice but not having visual access. This is to prevent disruptions and avoid concentration losses from males on the message being conveyed from natural desires that may emanate from seeing the body of the woman.

Islam represents 13.3 percentage of religious demography in Malawi (US Religious Freedom Report, 2015). Christianity, like Islam, has its own interpretations of gender relations. Although

all religious groups have their accepted standards of scriptural interpretations, fundamentalist preachers and believers have significant influence on scriptural applications. For example, according to 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (New International Version), “women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church”. Participants cited such passages of scripture as having been pervasively used, especially by Pentecostal preachers, to justify the subjugation of women in a country where 81.4 percent of the population identifies as Christian (US Religious Freedom Report, 2015). While one might argue that civil laws should take precedence over faith in influencing behavior, the applicability of the maxim is relative to the social foundations of that given society. In some societies, constitutions are influenced by religious values. As one participant vehemently argued,

It is also a very religious society where religion plays a very crucial role in shaping societies. Laws and acts mean so little to people than religious values do. If it is accepted religiously that women and girl’s rights and entitlements come second, then it is very difficult for policies and acts on paper to change people’s perspective.

The participants’ acknowledgement of these social as well as institutional problems is important in understanding how they approach the diffusion of gender norms in the Malawian society. This understanding justifies their resource distribution between institutional strengthening and ideological revolution. In the next subsection, I present evidence of how TNAs, in collaboration with their government partners, have executed policy approaches to respond to these social and institutional factors.

### ***7.3.3. Key Observations about Government and TNAs' Responses***

Following its ratification of the CEDAW in 1987<sup>67</sup>, Malawi has crafted and adopted several pieces of legislation and policy instruments to advance gender equality. Transnational actors have worked closely with the government and civil society actors to diffuse gender norms, often considered inimical to Malawian existential realities. As one TNA mentioned,

the International community has been very supportive in helping the government of Malawi achieve gender equality. The Royal Norwegian Embassy has been a major financial inlet for the ongoing 50-50 campaign. The international community has also supported the gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE) program which was being supported by the European Union through UNFPA.

One of the first factors of gender inequality the Malawian government sought to reverse was a common custom of “property grabbing” from widows. Because it was believed that males earned and owned all family property, a man’s relatives claimed all family property when he died, leaving widows and children without property. In response, the government passed the Wills, Inheritance and Protection Act of 2011 (PEPFAR, 2016). Traditional and religious leaders, CSOs, law enforcement institutions, and interest groups were co-opted in denouncing the practice. Two years later, the government adopted the Gender Equality Act of 2013 which robustly domesticated the provisions of the CEDAW. Malawi has several other legislations that deal with specifics of gender inequality and concerns around children. These include legislation on national guidance on gender equality, gender-based violence, and harmful cultural practices such as the Marriage, Divorce, and Family Relations Act of 2015; National Plan of Action to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Malawi 2014–2020 of 2015; Child (Care, Protection and Justice) Act of 2010; and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 2006. In 2016, the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and social welfare, with support from UNFPA-Malawi,

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<sup>67</sup> [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=104&Lang=EN](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=104&Lang=EN); Accessed 9/2/2018.

launched the 2016-2020 Gender Equality Act Implementation and Monitoring Plan, targeting the most vulnerable and the promotion of gender equality in all sectors of the society. In 2000, Malawi adopted the National Gender Policy to structure its implementation of its international obligations towards attaining gender equality, specifically in response to MDG 3. The National Gender Policy was revised and relaunched in 2015 to address emerging issues and challenges (National Gender Policy, 2015).

In addition, the National Gender and HIV Implementation Plan integrates priorities from the National Gender Policy into an operational plan (PEPFAR, 2016). Most importantly, the National Gender Policy stresses the importance of addressing gender inequality, harmful cultural practices, discrimination, and other human rights violations. The policy highlights the need for substantial community engagement to change customs and practices on gender relations and HIV/AIDS.

In all these legislative and policy solutions, TNAs and the Malawian government are visibly engaged with communities, traditional leadership structures, religious organizations and leaders, and information networks to propagate alternative frames of gender relations to help reverse gender inequalities. For example, in the intersection of gender and HIV/AIDS, the government has district-level officials and community leaders positioned to play the double role of program implementation and changing social norms (PEPFAR, 2016). At the same time, TNAs and the government have engaged community and religious leaders to influence social and cultural norms around gender, health, and HIV.<sup>68</sup> These actors are strategically positioned as the enforcers of customary law and architects of community by-laws. Participants repeatedly cited the need for community-level outreach and behavior change approaches to reduce gender-based

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<sup>68</sup> [http://www.healthpolicyplus.com/ns/pubs/2006-2007\\_PEPFARMalawiGenderAssessmentFINAL.pdf](http://www.healthpolicyplus.com/ns/pubs/2006-2007_PEPFARMalawiGenderAssessmentFINAL.pdf); Accessed 9/2/2018.

violence and to promote women's empowerment. They specifically emphasized the need to leverage local organizations and leaders who understand community-specific norms and practices.

Throughout the course of this study, participants in Malawi noted that traditional and religious institutions provide formal incentives and penalties that could either reinforce or change community level norms and practices and, therefore, frustrate or support legislative and other institutional measures for gender equality. Traditional and religious institutions were repeatedly cited as successful entry points for normative and ideological change. Participants stressed that it was imperative that, as “custodians of culture,” these community leaders be sensitized around gender norms (see also PEPFAR findings, 2016).<sup>69</sup> TNAs and the government worked collaboratively with NGOs and CSO networks to help strengthen and coordinate member organizations to engage in advocacy, local programs, and monitoring.

This diversity of the approaches is a recognition of the complex nature of gender relations in a society that has historically, ideologically, and ontologically sustained a set of norms, values, and customs that have become its identity.

#### **7.4. Gender and Ideational Processes in Malawi**

Figure 7.2. above shows the intricate web of spheres that contribute towards individuals' actions in their gender relations. Factors reflected in Figure 7.2. indicate the ranking of influential factors. While formal institutions are key among these factors, participants reveal that social structures, ideals, values, and norms, followed by religion, and then institutions, pattern gender relations. As the data indicates, TNAs and the Malawian government have closely divided their resources in the

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<sup>69</sup> [http://www.healthpolicyplus.com/ns/pubs/2006-2007\\_PEPFARMalawiGenderAssessmentFINAL.pdf](http://www.healthpolicyplus.com/ns/pubs/2006-2007_PEPFARMalawiGenderAssessmentFINAL.pdf); Accessed 9/2/2018.



diffusion of gender norms between the building and strengthening of political institutions as well as in working with the grassroots to revolutionize entrenched socio-cultural customs, practices, and religious belief systems supporting gender imbalances in the Malawian society.

Participants in Malawi spoke very insistently about culture and the slow progress made in gender equality campaigns. Many of the traditional practices that had largely died in Zambia, such as sexual cleansing, and wife inheritance were reported as very prevalent in Malawi. Being a predominantly rural agrarian society, Malawi is more predisposed to the retention of cultural norms than the highly urbanized Zambian society that, though it values its endogenous values and norms, seems more amenable to ideational transformation.<sup>70</sup> In addition, Malawi's rural characterization is evident in the respondents' frequent reference to agriculture as a critical area exhibiting gender inequalities. It is, therefore, tactful and strategic that TNAs, NGOs, and the government have devoted resources to ideological persuasion beyond legislative support. As one of the TNAs put it, policy actors are

mobilizing traditional and religious leaders on increasing young people's access to sexual and reproductive health rights services including young people that are part of the key populations. Due to the influence that traditional leaders have in their communities, [there is need] to empower them with the right information on gender sensitivity.

Another factor that stands out in the data is the strong coherence of TNA, government, CSO, and NGO actors on the objectives of the gender equality agenda. Despite the many institutional failures in implementing policies and in committing commensurate resources to the sector, all actors share the vision to see increased women participation in decision-making positions, diffusion of customs and cultural norms that support the subservience of women and spiral gender-based violence, and the economic empowerment of women. This cohesion leads to stronger messaging of gender equality and greater impact on targeted areas of change.

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<sup>70</sup> 80 percent of Malawi's population lives in rural areas where they dependent on subsistence agricultural practices.

## 7.5. Disability Policy Diffusion Processes in Malawi

**Table 7.3. Disability Policy Participants**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Categorization</i>
<i>Christian Blind Mission International Malawi</i>	TNA
<i>DFID</i>	TNA
<i>Disability in Islam</i>	Religious Organization
<i>Sight Savers</i>	TNA
<i>Association of People with Albinism in Malawi</i>	DPO
<i>Department of Disability and Elderly Affairs (Ministry of Gender)</i>	Government
<i>Center for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education</i>	NGO
<i>The Malawi Human Rights Commission</i>	Government
<i>Mr. Khwana</i>	Visually impaired
<i>Mai Nangozo</i>	Physically impaired (arm amputee)
<i>Mr. Chosadziwe</i>	Physically impaired (mobility)
<i>Ms. E. Banda</i>	Mother of child with disability (speech impediment)
<i>Mr. E. Mwale</i>	Visually impaired
<i>Ms. Mwenelupembe</i>	Hearing impairment
<i>N</i>	<b>14</b>

***Source: Field Data***

TNAs' work on gender equality in Malawi and Zambia presents not only an important illustration of transnational work in ideationally distinct societies, but also an often-elusive understanding of how important endogenous informal factors are to legitimating transnational policy norms in new settings. While maintaining the goal to build institutions, TNAs and their partners have weaved a deterministic and persuasive ideational and institutional onslaught that addresses complex intersectionalities of gender such as HIV/AIDS, development, children's

well-being, and human agency, among others. Most importantly, the diffusion of transnational norms has been patterned less on ideational conquest than on persuasion, education, and engagement.

## **7.6. Data Presentation – Disability**

Having seen TNAs' approaches in gender policy diffusion in Malawi, I now move to examining their approaches in disability policy diffusion in the same socio-political context. Although I list only 14 interviewees as disability actors, I asked all interviewees, including gender policy advocates and their TNA partners, if they had any disability-related programming for women with disabilities and if so, what their policy priorities were, and what they encountered as the greatest challenge for women with disabilities. Unlike in Zambia, Malawian gender equality policy actors also programmed for women with disabilities. According to the data, 8 out of 10 of the gender equality actors had a component of women with disabilities albeit underdeveloped, and all cited cultural perceptions, beliefs, and the subsequent societal treatment persons with disabilities as the strongest challenge.

Three major themes emerged from the data coding process. The three constituted the parent nodes (see Table 7.4.) under which several strands of child nodes fell. I aggregated the child nodes into the three parent nodes and moved some child nodes to parent nodes they most closely related. First, participants spoke repeatedly about whether existing institutions accounted for the lack of development and for the rampant social discrimination of persons with disabilities. Second, they frequently referred to the role of social norms in the characterization of the status quo for persons with disabilities. Third, discussions raised the role of TNAs as policy intermediaries in helping change the status quo. The two sub-themes from this topic were

whether TNAs focused on supporting the enactment of laws and policies, improving government's service provisions, and empowerment to persons with disabilities or whether they focused on changing dominant social factors through education, community sensitization, and engagement of perceived opinion leaders. These two themes often arose as comparatives of how TNAs and the government shared their focus on both and other remedial initiatives.

The most important part of this segment of the study is to understand what participants saw as the key challenges with disability policy in Malawi and, then, to understand how TNAs and their government and civil society partners are conceptualizing policy remedial interventions. First, while 85.7 percent of the participants believed that the dominant problem facing persons with disability in Malawi are social factors, 78.6 percent believed it was lack of or weak laws and policies that made the life of persons with disabilities difficult. Under "social factors", participants referred to religious beliefs, social beliefs, myths, socially motivated killings, hiding of family members with disabilities, socialization within family, public shame, and self-dejection. The Association of People with Albinism in Malawi, for example, spoke about how persons with albinism self-loathe, in addition to the strain imposed by rejection from family, differently disabled DPOs and the larger society. The key factors covered under institutions were laws, policies, government sensitization programs based on human rights as well as services through health, education, and charity responses.

Despite these findings, participants did not think that TNAs and their government and civil society and NGO partners distributed their resources between institutional and social factors in accordance with their levels of significance. While 57.1 percent of participants believed these policy actors concentrated their resources on strengthening of institutions, only 21.4 percent of the participants were convinced that policy actors channeled resources at all towards addressing

social factors. In terms of emphasis, participants insisted policy actors' commitment to institutional responses 39 percent of the time compared to 4.8 percent reference to the need to addressing social factors.

The participants' position on social factors and institutions seemingly suggests the need to pay equal attention to strengthening of laws and policies as well as ideological revolutions. However, of all the participants that said institutions were weak, only 14.3 percent believed that Malawi lacked good laws while 71.4 percent said existing laws were good but poorly implemented or not implemented at all. This then, suggests the real need to change the experiences of persons with disabilities in Malawi lies elsewhere and, in this case, with the 85.7 percent "social factor problem" that receives a negligible 21.4 percent attention compared to the 57.1 percent attention given towards institutions.

## **7.7. Contextualizing What the Data Says and How the Government and TNAs Respond**

### ***7.7.1. Preliminary Issues about DPOs***

The existing structure of DPOs in Malawi and in Zambia is influenced by the Southern African Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD). According to SAFOD, national level DPOs are governed by statutory entities that establish umbrella DPO organizations to monitor the works of DPOs. In Zambia, ZAPD is the statutory body that regulates DPOs. DPOs self-mobilize under ZAFOD. In Malawi, the Handicapped Persons Act of 1971 provides for the establishment of the Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA), which is a parastatal funded by the government to promote the welfare of persons with disabilities. Unlike ZAPD, MACOHA has traditionally regulated funding to DPOs. As a result, despite the adoption of the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2012, TNAs still feel obligated to funnel their policy and financial support to MACOHA.

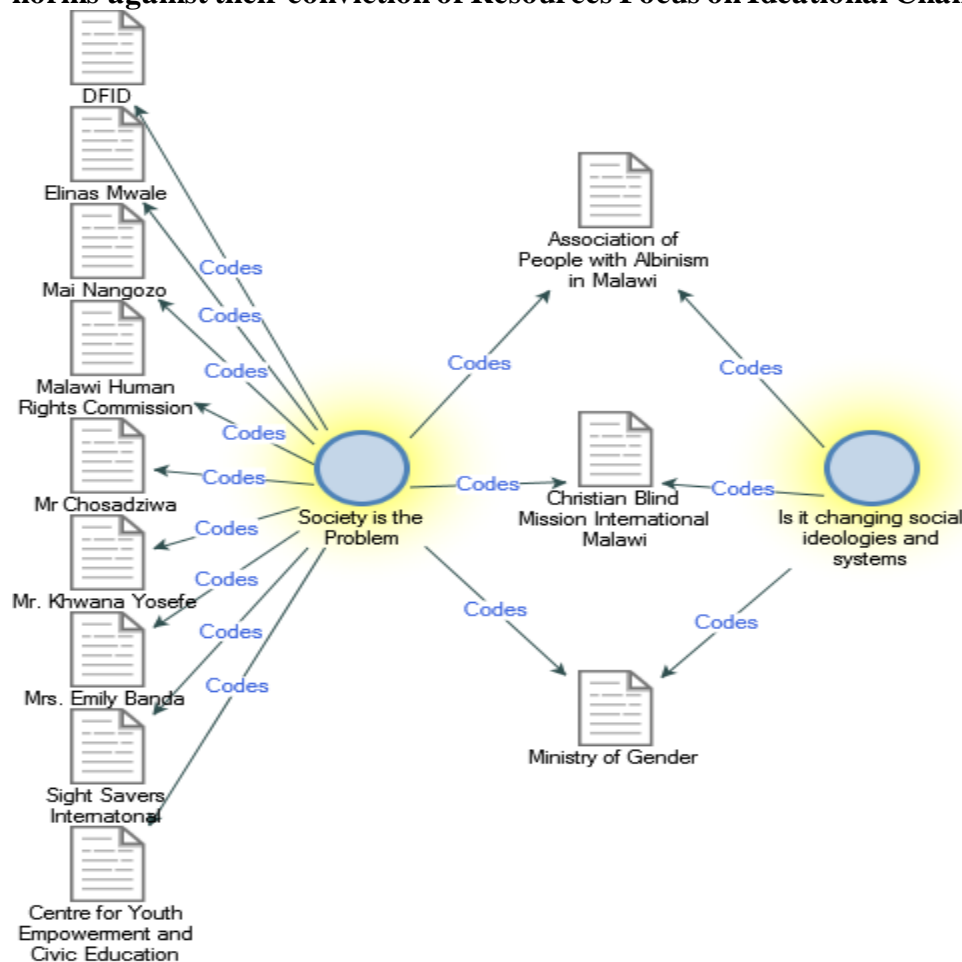
**Table 7.4. Disability Policy Diffusion Codebook**

Name	Description	Sources (N=14)	References	Percentage Share of Sources (N=14)	Percentage Share of Total References (N=105)
Society is the Problem	Religious beliefs, social beliefs, myths, socially motivated killings, hiding of family members with disabilities, socialization within family, public shame, self-dejection.	12	33	85.7%	31.4%
TNAs Main Focus of Engagement		----	---	---	---
Is it changing social ideologies and systems	Includes community mobilization, sensitization and education on disability (not human rights), programs enhancing acceptability and ideational changes	3	5	21.4%	4.8%
Is it Institutions	Includes laws, policies, government sensitization programs based on human rights	8	41	57.1%	39%
Services	Health, education, empowerment, mobility and other equipment, charity responses	5	21	35.7%	20%
Weak or Absent Institutions is the Problem		11	26	78.6%	24.8%
DPO Fragmentation		1	2	7.1%	1.9%
Good laws and policies but poor execution		10	20	71.4%	19%
Laws are good and strong		1	1	7.1%	1%
We lack laws at all		2	2	14.3%	1.9%

**Source: Field Data**

Others directly funnel their support to Federation of People with Disabilities in Malawi (FEDOMA), the umbrella body of DPOs. As a result, individual DPOs in Malawi struggle to survive and to successfully implement programs. The implication for this support structure is that TNAs' policy interests are primarily reflected in government priorities. Unlike in Zambia where TNAs directly influence advocacy directions with DPOs and CSOs, the MACOHA regulatory structure limits the agility of TNA advocacy and policy influence on DPOs.

**Figure 7.3. Diagrammatic Comparative of Respondents' Assessment of Influence of social norms against their conviction of Resources Focus on Ideational Change**



*Source: Field data*

Further, when MACOHA is funded, it transmits resources to FEDOMA which is supposed to sub-grant to DPOs. By design FEDOMA's role is coordination and not programs implementation. Because FEDOMA now implements programs, DPOs' access to resources is constricted. Therefore, when I discuss government responses to data findings, I am simultaneously reflecting TNA endorsement of policy approaches to disability policy diffusion.

### ***7.7.2. Social Factors Affecting Disability in Malawi***

While it is true that all societies have belief systems and stereotypes about disability (Braathen et al., 2015), not all societies base such beliefs on the fundamental cosmological worldviews. While in some societies such stereotypes are based on stigma for dependency on social welfare systems, in others these stereotypes border on life and death for persons with disabilities. Earlier in this chapter, I explained dire situations facing persons living with albinism in Malawi and, in Chapter 6, in Zambia. How dire the situation could be is summed up in the words of a leader of a DPO in Malawi: "People don't value us as human beings. We are "things" to be killed for money." Commenting on the fear among persons with albinism, the leader of the Association of Persons with Albinism in Malawi said:

The cases of abduction and killings of people with albinism [...]. This is a serious challenge that the country is facing. This has created an environment of fear and insecurity for people with albinism as a disability. This is deterring young people with albinism from attending school, for instance, fearing for their safety which is reducing their likelihood of empowering themselves economically as well as empowering them with knowledge which will enable them to stand for their rights as citizens and human beings.

In a very significant way, society's understanding of disability influences how its members treat persons with disabilities. As acknowledged by participants in the gender policy discussions in Chapter 6, policy makers are themselves products of social norms and their policy priorities and the seriousness they attach to policies are significantly influenced by their normative



backgrounds. For example, despite the robust policy instruments for addressing disability in Malawi, a 2013 UNICEF report found that

disability issues are not seen as high priority – for instance, children with disabilities are mentioned only once in the current Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS II). While the National Policy on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities is good, it does not identify strategies to deal with the particular challenges experienced by children with disabilities, and the policy itself needs review (UNICEF Malawi, 2013: iii).

Reasons for failure to implement policy could be vast, including, especially in African countries, lack of capacity due to financial resources and human resources constraints, policy legacies and many others. However, if these factors affect policy areas selectively or disproportionately, alternative explanations ought to be sought. In the case of disability, participants and many TNA documents (e.g. UNICEF Malawi, 2013) identify lack of government prioritization and commitment as the main explanations. It is, therefore, key to examine and address conceptualizations of disability to improve chances of success for disability policy. It is also important to understand individual societies to know what opportunities and challenges there are for endogenizing disability norms.

In Malawi, persons with disabilities face many social challenges. In a 2004 study on the living conditions of persons with disabilities in Malawi, Loeb and others (2004) found that persons with disabilities had disproportionate levels of exclusion in many human development indices. For example, “the proportion of those who have never attended school is almost twice as high among the disabled members as compared with the non-disabled (34.8 percent versus 17.7 percent respectively)” (Loeb et al. 2004:86). In terms of marriage, a variable that so importantly matters in social perception and personhood, while “fewer of those with disabilities reported never having been married, 26.9 percent compared to 31.6 percent among those without disabilities, among the disabled far fewer (46.6 percent) reported living in union (either married

with certificate or traditionally, or in a consensual union) than those without disabilities (58.2 percent)” (Loeb et al., 2004: 85).

According to research participants in this study, the main reasons for these discrepancies in the experience of life between persons with disabilities and those without border on deep-seated social norms, religious beliefs, and stereotypes that are largely influenced by cultural worldviews and impute values on personhood. One of the participants observed:

The main challenge is beliefs and myths such as disability or impairments come as part of punishment from God or ancestors for things that their parents or older generations did. These beliefs are what makes disability advocacy and mainstreaming a challenge. They are so deeply rooted to the extent that people kill their fellow members of community or as far as exhuming graveyards for body parts of people with albinism believing that their body parts are charms for getting riches.

Social norms are hard to change. As one participant observed, “Demystifying such myths has proved to be a challenge since such myths are learnt in societies at a young age and cannot easily be unlearned. Cultural norms have been the main challenge in the fight for promotion of rights of people with disabilities”.

The evidence that disability problems in Malawi are underpinned by social factors is abundant and overwhelming. Several organizations remarked how these cultural ideas about disability are carried through religious beliefs among citizens. Pentecostal pastors who preach about sin, often attribute bad luck and misfortune in families, including disability, to sin and offer exorcist services. I now turn to presenting findings about TNAs and government responses to these factors.

### ***7.7.3. TNA and Government Interventions in Disability***

Malawi ratified the CRPD in 2009. To comply with its international obligations, Malawi has adopted several pieces of domestic legislation and operationalizing policies. To domesticate the

provisions of the CRPD, the government of Malawi enacted the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2012 (Chilemba, 2013). The Act guarantees disability rights and prohibits discrimination based on disability. The Act also guarantees persons with disabilities the right to access education, health, rehabilitation, among others. The Act replaced the Handicapped Persons Act of 1971 that predominantly dealt with disability as a medical problem (Hummel et al., 2014). The 1971 Act, considered outdated and out of sync with prevailing international norms on disability, is also charity-based and does not stress the rights perspective of persons with disabilities. In addition to the 2012 Act, the Malawian constitution recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities and it prohibits discrimination based on disability. The Constitution guarantees all persons their right to education (Section 26). It also guarantees all Malawians the right to development and to enjoyment of economic, social, cultural and political development.

Prior to adopting the 2012 Persons with Disabilities Act, the Malawian government came up with the National Policy on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities of 2006 (Mannan et al., 2012). The rationale of this policy is to promote the rights of persons with disabilities to enhance their participation in society. The policy seeks to design concrete steps for persons with disabilities to enjoy their fundamental rights. To achieve these rights, the policy recognizes that there is need to do three things. First, that there is need to integrate disability issues into all government development strategies, plans and programs. Second, that there is need to integrate and coordinate management systems of planning, implementation and monitoring at all levels. Finally, that there is need to build capacity of all disability actors and mount nationwide public education and awareness campaigns about disability (UNICEF, 2013).

Malawi has other policies that directly address disability such as the National Policy on Special Needs Education of 2007 aimed at developing the personal, social and academic

competencies of learners with special needs. It also has the National Policy on Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children. Certainly, children with disabilities fall in the category of vulnerability. According to this 2003 policy, a vulnerable child is one who “has no able parents and guardians, staying alone or with elderly grandparents or lives in a sibling headed household or has no care, material and psychological care, education and has no shelter” (UNICEF, 2013: 23). Further, because of the role that early childhood education plays in the detection of disability, policies that enhance inclusiveness in early childhood education are also important in disability programming. For this reason, the 2006 National Policy on Early Childhood Development that was designed by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare is also a part of the disability policy infrastructure, albeit indirectly.

Whether or not these tools respond to perceived transnational needs or to the pertinent contextual demands articulated in the data could be determined by the policy approaches the government and its TNA partners have taken. Predominantly, TNAs participants said their priority programs were determined by the needs spelled out by the Malawian government in line with its transnational obligations through the CRPD. As a respondent from DFID put it:

The DFID complements the government in its activities in the disability and all the other areas; so, our priority areas for people with disabilities are those areas that the government has prioritized in its development framework. DFID has financed the Ministry of Education in the disability advocacy sector, for special needs education and inclusive education. We also funded the Ministry to construct schools whose designs we ensured were disability friendly. DFID has not significantly implemented direct disability projects, but we fund government and local NGOs in the disability sector.

From the data, government projects are predominantly human rights and services centered, both of which are coded under institution in the codebook (Table 7.4.). When TNAs and government’s projects mention community engagement, it is for human rights expansion or education about the laws that exist and the punitive consequences of violation rather than

ideological persuasion and selling of alternative views. There is a dominant focus on service provision in healthcare, education, financial empowerment programs for persons with disabilities such as agriculture, and skills development. For example, one TNA participant, like several others, said,

we are working with FEDOMA on an empowerment program with selected government ministries and agencies at national and district level on impact of different initiatives that the ministry is implementing and to assess what extent have such initiatives benefitted people with disabilities.

Another, stressing the services provision approach, said:

We are also focusing on economic empowerment of people with disabilities by increasing their access to education. The ministry of Education has instituted a special department (Special needs Department) that is focused on promotion and provision of education to people with disability from primary level to tertiary level. This is the main engine in promoting the rights of people with disabilities because if they are empowered, they will be aware of their rights and be able to defend them.

The charity approach was strong in service provision. Sight Savers, an international disability and health organization said, “Sight Savers believes in direct approach in tackling preventable blindness and disability issues in general. It believes in reaching out in rural communities and societies, where these are most found, and the people are most vulnerable”. The medical model and its rehabilitation approach are very widespread among the services provided by TNAs.

These TNAs and government programs are important remedial measures to root economic disadvantage of persons with disabilities who often constitute a disproportionate number of the country’s poor. They are also important for strengthening institutional infrastructure of laws and policies that support an equal society where people with disabilities enjoy full human rights standards. However, important as they may be, these interventions are not in sync with the priority demands of the data and how the Malawian society perceives what lies at the core of the challenges facing people with disabilities in the country. Perhaps these

would be important auxiliary projects complementing the primary policies designed to alter social factors that characterize the day-to-day experiences of persons with disabilities as they see them. The gravity of these social factors is often punctuated by tragic abuses and even deaths, as is the case with the killing of albinos and confinements of family members with disabilities.<sup>71</sup> As long as social factors, ideas, beliefs, and perceptions are not addressed, no amount of economic progress or legislative determination will create an equal and equitable socio-political and economically viable environment for persons with disabilities in Malawi in such a deeply ideationally constituted society.

## **7.8. Discussion**

There are important conclusions we can derive from the two policy domains and how policy actors approach them. First, it is striking how strongly participants thought that social factors influenced both gender and disability policy domains and the contrasts exhibited by TNAs' approaches between the two sets of observations. The pattern of approaches employed by TNAs and their various policy allies in the two policy areas suggests several things, but for our purposes, that disability TNAs have not yet reached the degree of advancement that gender TNAs have in incorporating local knowledge in their policy designs. Disability policy work is still caught up in the universalized ideals almost "cut-and-paste" from the transnational documents like the CRPD. These "universal truths" have not yet sunk and resonated with endogenous realities that define and characterize the existential realities of disability in Malawi, as equally is the case with Zambia. As one participant observed,

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<sup>71</sup> The very fact that a society would not implement programs meeting the basic needs of over 10 percent of its population (whether it is enforcement of standards of infrastructure, social protection, or provision of education material) signifies its rank of priorities which are not singularly explained by a availability of resources but also by its sense of importance of the perceived need. These are the factors that need strategic onslaught and reversing.

One thing that surprises me is that, despite there being legislation available, people [...] do not reference its specifics to address challenges of disability. People talk about, for example, the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2012 in general terms, without specifying its provisions. This indicates lack of knowledge about legal frameworks supporting the disability agenda and could effectively weaken the organizational advocacy and demands for inclusion.

Second, although the issue came up only 1.9 percent of the time, the internal fragmentations among DPOs are important for understanding their cleavages to transnational players while negating the existential factors that need their urgent attentions. DPOs' fragmentations, which significantly compromise their capacity to mediate TNA policy proposals to strategic domestic actors and sectors of society, are primarily resource and interest based. People with specific disabilities mobilize around their narrow interests and compete both for policy attention and financial resources. This, in political science, is well explained by ecological niche theory. Lowery et al., (2004) argue, based on population ecology, that species sharing common vital resources will compete over that resource until one realized niche is no longer able to exist. The niche theory further suggests that only those groups sharing common vital resources will compete and partition the resource and that the primary outcome of this competition is niche partitioning, ultimately resulting in elimination of some groups and survival of others. Therefore, where scrambling for resources precedes a common cause and passion for activism per se, organizations are certainly likely to be fragmented and less effective. Unlike the gender movement that is characterized by its unison, DPOs in Malawi are confounded by in-fighting, competition for resources, and divisions. As one participant put it, "because of in-fighting and the difficulty with accessing funding, many DPOs die naturally".

One of the reasons this is the case is that, although the transnational disability advocacy has been around almost as long as the MDGs, the superstructure governing disability advocacy in southern Africa was initially inspired by SAFOD that legitimated the national-level

operations. Still, degrees of adherence and flexibility vary from country to country. While in Zambia the umbrella NGO for DPOs coordinates disability advocacy and the statutory organ registers and monitors them, these two do not restrict the financial support DPOs receive from their TNA partners. Their divisions, therefore, although also influenced by financial and interest competitions, do not emanate from a structural cause as is the case in Malawi. In Malawi, MACOHA and FEDOMA have predominantly served as resource traps for other DPOs because TNAs have customarily been obligated to funnel resources through the regulative bodies. DPOs argue that the dissolution of MACOHA would facilitate the creation of a less tensed DPO environment and smoother and cohered interactions among DPOs in Malawi. These factors, therefore, all contribute to the difficulties of disability work in Malawi. Although they are important considerations for bettering disability policy activism, they do not reduce the seriousness of TNAs' inadequate attention to social factors that so saliently emerge as key factors in the characterization of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in Malawi.



## **CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS – VIABILITY OF DIFFUSION OF TRANSNATIONAL GENDER AND DISABILITY NORMS IN MALAWI AND ZAMBIA**

Parts of this chapter have been reorganized to draft a book chapter by Privilege Haang'andu entitled "Towards an Afrocentric Disability Activism: Opportunities and challenges of Transnationalizing disability advocacy in Africa" in a volume edited by Karen Soldatic and Kelley Johnson titled *Global Perspectives on Disability Activism and Advocacy*, by Taylor & Francis, Routledge.

### **8.0. Introduction<sup>72</sup>**

Five key themes emerge from the preceding empirical chapters that need closer attention. First, there is an implied contention about the applicability of the concept of individual human rights in highly communitarian, non-individualistic settings like Malawi and Zambia. While the promotion of human rights is crucial, how these rights are socialized, rationalized, and translated from the transnational to the national level is not obvious. Second, it is key that we understand how differently policy diffusion occurs in ethnically fractionalized societies and in those that are socially and culturally homogenous. Third, there is need to clarify what institutions are and to explain their role in policy diffusion processes. Fourth, policy diffusion is not a one-sided linear process where TNAs deliver policy ideas to a non-rational recipient. Rather, policy diffusion has both the supply and the demand sides, both with distinct complexities that, if not well handled, could frustrate the process of transnational policy diffusion. Fifth, as Kenneth Waltz (2000) and Peter Hall (1993) point out, transnational movements are not politically or ideationally neutral. They border on the concept of power. It means that successful policy diffusion should recognize the origins of ideas and how that affects power relations.

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<sup>72</sup> Excerpts of this chapter constitute a book chapter entitled "Towards an Afrocentric Disability Activism: Opportunities and challenges of Transnationalizing disability advocacy in Africa" submitted and accepted for publication in an international volume *Global Perspectives on Disability Activism and Advocacy*, edited by Karen Soldatic and Kelley Johnson, Routledge, London, 2019.

Through these factors, this chapter demonstrates how the policy diffusion process could be enhanced through bricolage and translation by employing technical steps of socialization, rationalization, and institutionalization. It is through these processes that policy ideas could achieve a comprehensive degree of policy revolution. Diffusion efforts that bypass these mechanisms could, at best, achieve first and second orders of policy change, and at worst, fail to engender any meaningful policy change.

### **8.1. Individual Rights, Communitarianism, and Policy Diffusion – Contesting Universality**

In a statement disputing the assumed universality of Eurocentric disability discourse, Grech (2015: 11) writes:

Despite the attempts by a handful of materialist disability theorists to engage with the so-called ‘majority world’ [...], it becomes immediately clear that these efforts appear to be limited to writing in, or making the global south fit into their dominant perspectives as opposed to learning about this complex and hybrid space in its own right [...]. For some, the objective may well be the transfer and exportation of discourse, in this case the strong social model of disability to everyone, everywhere, with the objective of reinforcing its universality as a global narrative and perhaps reasserting the power of those generating and selling it”.

Indeed, the current transnational disability discourse is imbued in Western knowledge and ideological, theoretical, cultural, and historical assumptions (Grech, 2015), with little sensitivity to different cultural, ideological, and historical contexts. One such approach is the rights-based approach to disability that seeks to valorize the individual against the collective. One of the biggest challenges with transnational human rights-oriented policy diffusion in Africa in general is the oversight of historically entrenched collective identities, which are essentially non-individualistic. Participants both in Zambia and in Malawi stressed how this collectivism could be a source of strength but also of difficulty in domesticating human rights principles. Many African scholars have written on the *Bantu* philosophy of *Ubuntu* (Christian, 2004; Mji et al,

2011; Wiredu, 2008) that so profoundly characterizes the *Bantu* people of Africa. The term *ubuntu* is common among many *Bantu* languages across the continent and it translates as “humanity for others” (Christian, 2004: 241). In Zulu language, for example, *ubuntu* derives from a maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which translates as “a person is a person through other persons” (Christian, 2004; see also Mji et al, 2011) or *I am, because we are*. As Christian (2004: 241) explains, *ubuntu* “means that a person depends on personal relations with others to exercise, develop and fulfil those capacities that make one a person [...]. Personhood comes as a gift from other persons”. Central to the concept of *ubuntu* is the understanding that human beings are intrinsically social beings, and that their dignity is integrated in rationality and morality (Christian, 2004).

Cultural identity, unlike Western democratic governance where electorates decide through the ballot under the framework of a social contract, is more of involuntary acquiescence. People are born into a culture they have little control over as individuals. These individuality versus communitarian comparatives have serious implications for the applicability of legal and judicial frameworks that stress individual rights against common values. Here is how.

In entrenched Western democratic societies, where individual liberties and freedoms are central to civilization, court systems and litigation are effective. In these societies, judicial processes through institutionalized courts, are strong and binding on all parties involved. The institutional court system as we know it today as a pinnacle of individual emancipation, is an abstraction of the Western civilization. The judiciary, as an arm of government, is a colonial inheritance. Like other colonial institutions of governance in Africa, the concept of the Western-centric judiciary is, understandably, still struggling to entrench itself in African political cultures.

This has created two problems. First, the sense of communal solidarity and collective responsibility and shame, is more binding than the doctrine of individual exoneration through judicial victories. Second, judicial impartiality in Africa remains a significant problem. Some scholars have argued that judicial systems in developing countries in general are weak (Besley & Persson, 2014). In a robust study of adjudication of electoral disputes in Sub-Saharan Africa, O'Brien Kaaba (2015) documents the challenges of judicial neutrality throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. In all Sub-Saharan African countries, constitutions allow presidents to appoint judges, often without tenure of office, leaving judges' security of office to the caprices of politicians. Often, the result has been that judges are politically pliable. In rare cases when judges exhibit independence and rule against government officials, rulings are ignored, publicly ridiculed, and sometimes judges are removed.

The foregoing two points have far reaching implications for gender and disability policy diffusion in Malawi and in Zambia. First, it means that women and persons with disabilities, like everybody else, respect more collective purposes than individual "rights", as is the case in Western civilizations (See also Grech, 2011). These social ties, then, shape the experience of gender relations and the disability experience in a way, creating unique challenges and opportunities for policy intervention. As participants observed in both countries, women are overly reticent about gender-based abuses because of this cultural-blanket. In many cases where reports are filed, they are often withdrawn, and cases discontinued. Second (although courts have acted mostly efficiently with gender-related violations where they have been allowed to) the implication of weak judicial systems for the transnationalization of disability norms is that there is no predictability as to whether court systems would act as credible remediation for disability causes. In southern Africa, where government executives frequently influence the judiciary or

defy judicial rulings, it is difficult to imagine courts would, contrary to Vanhala's (2010) arguments for the relevance of courts in Canada and in the United Kingdoms, be credible means to champion disability "rights", especially when judicial outcomes have punitive financial implications on arms of government.<sup>73</sup>

## **8.2. Ethnolinguistic fractionalization and Policy Diffusion**

One of the conspicuous characteristics of many African societies is cultural heterogeneity. Both Malawi and Zambia have vast ethnic heterogeneities although they both have within-country common identities. Political scientists have theorized about the implications of ethnolinguistic fractionalization in building institutions. One of the arguments made is that ethnolinguistic fractionalization complicates institution building and policy change (Besley & Persson, 2014; Mauro, 1998). In an ethnolinguistically fractionalized society, diversity of cultural ideas makes it hard to impose a homogenous policy across the country. The assumption that gender equality norms, disability knowledge, and policy ideologies founded in one part of the world would seamlessly localize in ethnolinguistically fractionalized Malawi or Zambia is problematic.

Because of their ethnolinguistic fractionalization, Malawian and Zambian societies are ideationally fragmented and require more complex strategies of disability and gender policy response than the western universalistic agenda. As demonstrated in the examples of persons living with albinism and of women living with disabilities above, the existential realities of persons with disabilities in southern African countries, both in terms of challenges and opportunities, are uniquely shaped by local ideational factors that might not be amenable to a

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<sup>73</sup> This is a good project for future investigation. There is need to study how effective courts have been in adjudication disability and gender cases in southern Africa. It is not the priority of this research to delve into such details.

universal policy prescription. However, the data shows that a more urbanized country would be more receptive to exogenous policy proposals than a more rural one. In other words, the more rural a society, the greater its propensity to retain cultural values. In Zambia, a lot of the cultural factors described as persistent in the Malawian society have died away with increased urbanization.

Building universal disability regimes that command voluntary multiethnic acceptance, then, is much more complex than the transnationalization of unquestioned Western-founded ideologies. The preceding two points have significant implications for the conceptualization and application of institutional theory.

### **8.3. The Idea of Institutions and Policy Diffusion**

At the heart of this discussion is the attempt to explain why TNAs working in gender policy diffusion in Malawi and Zambia went beyond the political institutional model to propagate transnational norms while their disability policy counterparts did not in both cases, despite the significance participants attached to social factors' influence on both policy areas. These variations could be explained by two distinct applications of institutional theory. While some scholars believe that political institutions are necessary and sufficient gateways towards successful policy diffusion (Risse, 2007), others see a stronger symbiosis between formal rules/laws that constrain and shape social action and the imbedded informal norms that legitimate those formal rules (Campbell, 2004; North, 1994; Scott, 2005). The latter stress that institutional change does not simply mean the change of political policy instruments but, most profoundly, the change in norms that underpin objectives of and legitimate formal rules.

This constructivist conceptualization of institutions has two implications for policy diffusion. First, since policies, as formal rules and precepts, are part of the institution, their change must seek to alter not just the instrumental aspects represented by formal rules but also the normative aspects, including social expectations, customs, and belief systems. These social factors, which Parsons (2007) calls ideational factors, matter significantly in policy diffusion because every society is defined by its sets of persistent cultural ideas. These ideas define societies, and they create and establish social interests that societies live by and would not willingly sacrifice because policy instruments have changed. For example, an African country so entrenched in cultural precepts could be convinced to outlaw female genital mutilation. Without ideational strategies that socialize and rationalize the new precepts, no punitive law would easily engender change of social norms governing belief systems around the value and importance of the practice. This, therefore, raises an important discussion about framing in policy processes. As Baumgartner and Jones (1991: 1046) demonstrate in what they call “policy imaging”, framing of policy ideas is crucial not just in the justification of new policies, but also in the legitimation of alternative world views.

In the two cases, an important obstacle to disability policy diffusion is the lack of TNAs and their partners’ strategic engagement with grassroots actors to build a critical ideational shift that both backs the change in formal laws and rules and, at the same time, puts pressure on social factors sustaining existing frames about disability. Gender activists and their TNA partners have applied the model. While fighting for legislative reforms (laws, budget inclusiveness, increased electoral participation, more representation in appointed senior government positions, etc.), they took to the grassroots to sell and rationalize alternative ideational images and frames about male-female relations. Gender activists and disability activists, placed in their original positions, face

similar social hurdles: inhibitive social and religious belief systems, stereotypes, contested status, etc. Like gender TNAs and advocates acknowledged, framing requires skillful engagement with oppositional, often entrenched cultural images that people could be defensive about. It also requires persuasion rather than conquest. Ideational change is evidenced by the legitimacy of translated or bricolage alternatives and not by asymmetrical acquiescence.

The second ramification is that the degree of policy change is only as profound as policy proposers' breadth of engagement with diverse social actors who legitimate a given policy idea. If Hall's (1993) third level of policy change is desired, context-specific ideas that determine social objectives and goals upon which institutions and policies are designed must be taken into account. To do this, any meaningful activism should be based on a coherent and contextual understanding of institutions, their structures, and operations. The assumption that institutions have a universal character often leads to the pitfall that they can resolve all social problems regardless of cultural and normative circumstances. In this case, social science scholars have shown that the logic that change of formal rules (or policy instruments) is sufficient to change human behavior is flawed. Douglas North (1994), for example, argues that while it is easy to change formal rules overnight, informal norms, which are the anchor for belief, identity, knowledge, and behavior, usually change only gradually. The logic here is that institutions are birthed through social interactions and they are often a representation of people's cultural-cognitive values and informal beliefs (see also Campbell, 2004: 1-9). Institutions and their enforcement build on and reinforce informal norms and beliefs. They create, because of repeated human behavior in response to them, reciprocal expectations and standards. In other words, they create a culture.



The foregoing has important ramifications for the transnationalization of disability and gender activism in Malawi and in Zambia. First, as Grech (2011: 89) aptly observes, when disability knowledge and policy is grounded on West-centric ideologies and experiences, “it implies that it is theoretically ill-equipped to deal with majority world views and the nuances of majority world contexts (historical, social, economic and political)”. Policy actors should comprehend that brokering agreements at the United Nations or through political institutions on disability and gender policy for all nations does not guarantee behavioral change in gender relations and towards persons with disabilities in African countries like Malawi and Zambia. Given the cultural-cognitive embeddedness of both gender relations and disability in such African countries, it is important to understand that whatever policy interventions are made, they must confront the hard reality of the deep ontological ideational understanding of gender relations and disability. As such, activist efforts in these contexts need to employ effective discursive (or rationalization) frames towards the public, through carefully selected strategic intermediaries (i.e., civic educators), to convince them that reform is necessary (Kingdon, 2003). Like any other society, Malawian and Zambian societies have unique cultural idiosyncrasies difficult to change overnight. For example, both these societies, as many other African countries, have a strong adherence to family and communal ties (for disability in the Global South in general, see Clare Barker and Stuart Murray, 2010; Grech, 2011).

During my field research in Zambia, a leader of a women’s organization remarked that over 90 percent of domestic child sexual defilement cases were perpetrated by close relatives and not by unknown strangers. She and several other participants agreed that the greatest stumbling block to fighting sexual violence and rape of women and young girls is not the lack of punitive laws. Instead, it has been that families decide to protect violators to prevent “family shame”. In

this example, despite the existence of punitive legislative provisions, social norms, beliefs, and practices (which Elinor Ostrom, 2014, refers to as evolutionary and cultural social norms, which create reciprocal expectations) stifle the prosecutorial prospects. While most of the cases remain unreported due to these social justifications, in some instances victims report violations but withdraw complaints yielding to family and societal pressure to avoid “family shame”. Often, families prefer secret domestic dispute settlement to judicial proceedings that could potentially result in the arrest and prosecution of one of their kith and kin, sometimes the family breadwinner. Several participants in Zambia and in Malawi mentioned that familial protectionist tendencies exacerbate sexual abuse of girls and women. Women with disabilities, whom some African societies believe possess spiritual powers to cure sexually-transmitted diseases, are at a higher risk.

How ought activists to confront such socially entrenched barriers? A gender or disability activism that insists on individual rights supremacy is not only incongruent to the experience of gender relations or of persons with disabilities in this context, but it is counterproductive. With all the social expectations historically created and sustained, it is unlikely that women or individuals with disabilities, so embedded within this social fabric, would seek litigious measures against their immediate family or community or nation for perceived violations. Homogenizing gender and disability policy based on Western experiences and ideology defies logic, in this context.

#### **8.4. Two Faces of Transnational Policy Diffusion**

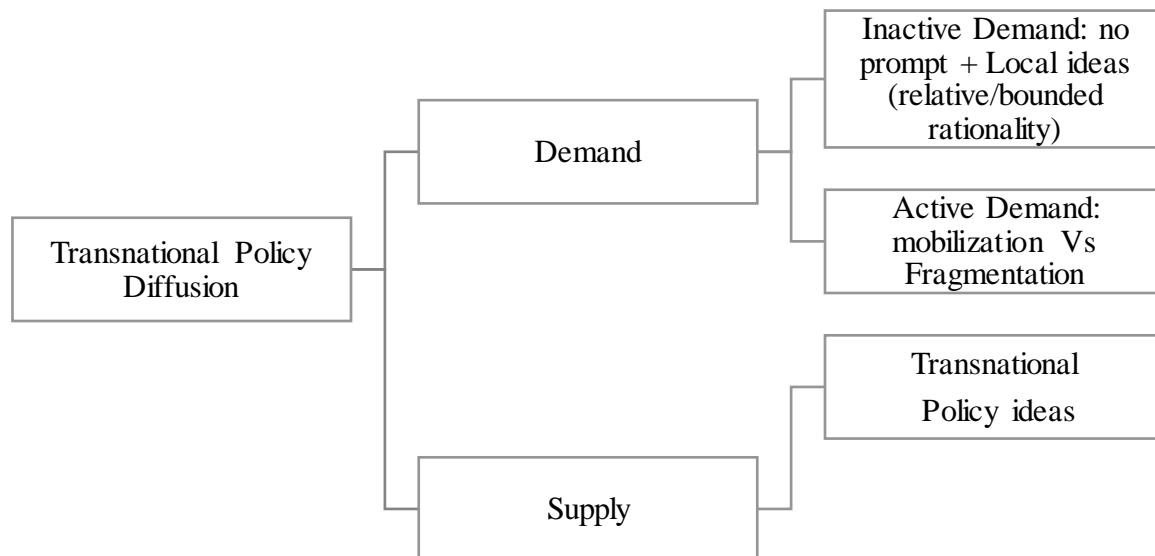
The data in this study leads to the conclusion that transnational policy diffusion should be mindful of two important components of diffusion: the supply and the demand components (see

Figure 8.1. below). These two have implications for understanding power relations (which I discuss in greater detail in the next section) in policy diffusion and for determining success and failure for policy diffusion. The supply side simply means that a policy entrepreneur notices a situation (problematic or not) needing a policy response and proposes a solution. For example, the observation that socio-economic and political benefits were inequitably distributed in society between men and women led to the emergence of feminist solutions.

However, supplying policy ideas should be balanced with the demand side. The demand side constitutes two components: the inactive demand and the active demand. The inactive demand is where a given society does not actively seek change to its status quo, but an outside policy proposer seeks to initiate change based on perceptions about a situation the outside actor sees as problematic. The policy proposer must prove through a compelling indicator that there is need for change of status quo. As Kingdon (1995: 93) argues, “constructing an indicator and getting others to agree to its worth become major preoccupations of those pressing for policy change”. In the context of this study, society A could have a male-female relationship status it does not see as problematic but actor B (a TNA) sees it as a problem. In the case where the status quo is acceptable and not considered problematic e.g., female genital mutilation (FGM) for some East African communities, an outside entity might see a problem needing a policy intervention. This, in other words, is the impetus for universalization. Transnational actors and policy proposers see problems beyond their jurisdictions and propose solutions, assuming or believing that a perceived problem borders on a universal principle or that their proposed solution is responsive to their diagnostic.

The inactive demand side is primarily guarded by what Campbell (2004: 94) refers to as “public sentiments”. It means that if an outsider attempts to change them, public normative resistance is imminent, potentially seen as ideological intrusion.

**Figure 8.1. Demand and Supply Sides of Policy Diffusion**



*Source: Data Abstraction*

However, the demand side also has an active side where a given policy community actively seeks policy solutions to its perceived problem. Still, this demand for policy solutions could either be endogenously or exogenously engendered. This is seen especially with both the gender and the disability movements within Malawi and Zambia seeking policy solutions to respond to their important needs. Successful policy diffusion should address both the demand and supply factors. What we see in the two policy domains is a contrast between how gender policy entrepreneurs designed a very well-orchestrated diffusion approach addressing both components while the disability policy entrepreneurs are stagnated at the supply end, weakly addressing the demand side. Where the supply side is emphasized, especially when policy ideas

border on power relations, policy change evokes ontological and ideational asymmetries, what Grech (2015) calls epistemic violence. Often, this leads to ideational acquiescence and conquest. Disability policy participants in this study agreed that cultural barriers were strong, but also that PDOs are fragmented. It means that both demands ends of the disability policy framework are unviable. While the inactive demand side for gender policy was equally non-viable (by being ideationally guarded), the active demand facilitated dynamic changes to both demands ends to increase receptiveness of the supply end. This process is key to policy change legitimation.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Here is how the two compare:

Gender: addressed supply side. The gender human rights agenda is very strong. As illustrated, the transnational domain is a wash with treaties, protocols, and legislation guiding nations' behavior toward gender equality. Nations have responded and have adopted domestic legislation to domesticate a lot of these international treaties.

On the demand side, two observations are important. First, gender TNAs targeted the local receptacles of ideational identities that influence the gender inequalities in Zambia and in Malawi. Although problems abound, all participants acknowledged intermediate progress in the attainment of gender equality. MDGs were a good measure for this success. Second, gender TNAs, with their domestic partners, managed to harness a formidable gender advocacy coalition that helped enhance the gender agenda. Here, the well-organized gender movements pulled together a critical mass difficult to ignore politically. Women's movements ushered such a large political influence that any political party or government could only ignore them at their own peril. This had the triple effect of putting pressure on entrenched cultural and social identities that had endured vicissitudes of time; of putting pressure on political actors to change policy instruments; and of garnering further TNA support through financial and technical support. With a unified large mass, gender movements and their TNA supporters compelled local political actors to change policy instruments and, at the same time, ideological leaders like religious leaders and traditional leaders, to rethink cultural factors that for long defined male-female relations.

Disability: Unlike their gender counterparts, disability TNAs and their domestic TNAs have not yielded a similarly coherent and unified political and ideational force. Surprisingly, even where the same TNAs overlap support to the two policy areas, their approaches have been different. The one observation that stands out is that, while the supply side is ably strong through transnational treaties, norms proliferation, and visible legislative enactments at the domestic level, the demand side has been fragmented and innocuous. This is visible in several ways from the field data. The data stressed that DPOs are preoccupied with championing narrow interests of persons with particular disabilities, e.g., the deaf on their own, the blind on their own, etc. Whereas the women movements identified a common cause for their shared interests, and rallied a common agenda of feminism, disability policy entrepreneurs have been fragmented on a few fronts. Organizational fragmentation has not only weakened DPOs and disability TNAs' collective force, it has also politically emboldened policy gatekeepers from translating disability interests into well-funded policy commitments. In addition, this has crippled the DPOs' ability to constitute a political mass to shake the ideational status quo among ideational gatekeepers like religious leaders, traditional leaders, political actors, etc.

### **8.5. Power and Policy Diffusion - Implications for Political and Ideational Asymmetries**

Although international organizations present transnational policy ideas and norms as neutral, universal, and disinterested, political scientists have demonstrated that transnational policy diffusion is characterized by power contestations (Waltz 2000). A perspective to the idea of power that has sparked academic controversy is one by Steven Lukes (1974). Lukes holds a neo-Marxist view that power is relational and asymmetrical. It is power over another or others. According to him, power is the ideological capacity to shape the preferences of other actors misleadingly in order to reinforce one's domination (Béland, 2010). Contrary to Lukes' conception of power as "power over", Morriss (2006: 126) argues that "our primary understanding of power is as "power-to"" and that "it follows from this that "power" is best thought of as the ability to effect outcomes, not the ability to affect others". Understanding the conceptual distinction between Lukes' "power over" and "power to," which refers to the capacity to shape outcomes (Morriss, 2006), is crucial for our understanding of transnational policy diffusion.

While transnational players are autonomous institutions, their policy ideas are seldom those without the backing of powerful countries that finance their operations. While many times TNAs have openly used their control over these institutions to manipulate global political outcomes (what Luke's suggests as "power over"), transnational policy is almost always characterized by ideational power asymmetries. Although transnational policy diffusion, as Hall (1993) puts it, is always about "powering" and "puzzling", achieving policy outcomes through manipulation of formal political institutions, particularly on matters socially entrenched, is seldom a viable way to diffuse policy. In the case of disability, the failure is more to do with assumptions of Western-centric norms that overshadow the paramountcy of local cultural ideas

in influencing ontological identities that could stifle policy diffusion. As Campbell (2004) suggests, policy change should address not only the cognitive but also the normative ideas, bearing in mind the background and foreground variables affecting policy change acceptability.

Further, where powerful policy proposers use their economic incentives to manipulate and obtain compliance, “power over” could secure change of policy instruments but not of social identities. With transnational actors playing dominant roles in financing development policies in both gender and disability in Malawi and Zambia, these countries are faced with the challenge of “puzzling and powering”. Presented with treaties at the international level, whether they have the capacity and desire to implement the provisions, these countries’ dispositions to accept policy proposals are constantly determined by “powering” dynamics of appeasement and fear of retributions. For example, in 2017, the United States Government coerced developing countries to side with its controversial decision to move the United States Embassy to Jerusalem. The United States labeled those that did not side with it as “enemies” who would no longer receive its development assistance. As bearers of large costs in health, welfare services, and education budgets that primarily cover gender and disability policies, TNAs and their funders have significant leverage over policy directions in these countries. Not only does financial leverage by transnational actors reduce states’ bargain power on policy goals; it, especially in African countries, has been a source of concern for corruption where political cartels use aid as buffers for looting of public and aid resources. For example, in September 2018, the British Government, along with the Swedish, Irish, and Finnish suspended donor aid to Zambia after the Zambian government had misappropriated over \$4 million meant for social cash transfer programs for poor people and for persons living with disabilities. Therefore, the split of control between transnational actors who wield financial power and state actors who organize their local

systems, threatens the viability for real paradigmatic change in policy diffusion in general.

Although there are no absolute solutions to this problem, aligning both actors' goals through ideational bricolage and translation provides a strong remedy. Bricolage and translation offer an ideational equilibrium that both presents legitimacy for locals and satisfies universalistic aspirations of the TNAs.

Further, both Malawi and Zambia face additional obstacles, including policy legacies and regulations and the existing asymmetrical political and economic power relations between them and the industrialized countries. These factors make it even harder for them to comprehensively implement costly and resource-demanding policy frameworks. In addition, Malawi and Zambia's capacity for implementation of new policies is further compounded by the lack of human, financial, and technical resources to implement new policies, the resistance to change on the part of certain key social and political actors and, finally, conjectural economic and political crises that can suddenly shift the agenda away from policy change in particular areas. African countries sign almost every treaty at the United Nations, but their actual implementation on the ground is almost none-existent. As Lascoumes (2006: 417) argues, "if it (i.e., policy change) is not included in a public policy program and operationalized by a set of concrete and implemented measures, there is only a change on the surface of things and the new paradigm dissolves into a smokescreen."

## **8.6. Bricolage and Translation of Ideas**

To begin to make disability policy pathways that crack into African societies' socio logical and philosophical foundations, disability activism in southern Africa should be informed by the endogenous understanding and experience of society. I propose building an Afrocentric



disability activist paradigm whose foundations derive from contextual ontology. By design, the African ontology is characterized by a culture of reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities with justice and mutual caring (Gyekye, 1997). This African philosophy presents profound opportunities for the reconceptualization of a context-responsive model of disability activism within the southern African context. Since it is among communities, families, and sociological groups and associations that disability frames are constituted and sustained, it is also from among them that ideational spinners for conceptual shifts should emerge. Transnational activists' pre-occupation with political processes for disability policy change and rights promotion misses this point. While political institutions play a significant role in the policy process, they are ill-positioned to transform entrenched non-formal cultural-cognitive beliefs and attitudes. Instead, it is civic educators (traditional leaders, religious leaders, community leaders, teachers, etc.), that are best placed to be ideational entrepreneurs. Civic educators, particularly in the African context, are strategically positioned to reinforce or alter social beliefs, challenge epistemological positions, and to help re-align norms and values. The pitfall of the Western-centric disability activism is both its assumed universalistic disability knowledge paradigm as well as its methodological approach that, despite ideational variation, seeks institutional expansion of individual rights in an intrinsically communitarian society.

To amplify this point, let us consider a concrete example. In the early 2000s, transnational activists sponsored and supported a vibrant gender activism in Africa that resulted in a plethora of women-led activist organizations. At inception, there was a strong focus on criminalizing certain social ills; for example, spouse inheritance, sexual cleansing, gender-based violence, marriage of underage girls, etc. Certain male-female interactions ordinarily taken for

granted in African societies came under scrutiny and many were deemed violations against women's rights. Although these efforts were obviously important in trying to deter abuse of women and in enhancing women's rights, transnational and domestic organizations that worked to reverse these trends in many African countries eventually realized, after decades of working through legislative avenues of government with little success, that working through community leaders such as chiefs and heads of religious organizations, incorporating endogenous norms, values, and ideas, was more impactful in reversing the trends.<sup>75</sup> In fact, in some cases, forceful use of the law was counterproductive because societies became more reticent about occurrences of some of these ills. For example, the Zambia National Women's Lobby, the largest women's movement in Zambia with a wide regional reach in southern Africa, acknowledged during an interview that it learned it needed to desist from framing its messages as "promoting women's rights" during its campaigns to make an impact on the heavily patriarchal Zambian society. The justification for using alternative frames was that the patriarchal Zambian society would be aversive to such language and, therefore, resistant to transformation. Yet, the result of its advocacy was the attainment of communities that developed a new sense of respect for women and their contribution to society, and the condemnation of physical and emotional abuse of women in marriage, and the heightened value for education of the girl child. The organization also reiterated the importance of working through informal structures as opposed to concentrating on legislation. This point was reiterated by a senior Zambian government official during an interview: "we do not want to be a police state. We need transformation of attitudes and not mere forced compliance to legislation."

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<sup>75</sup> Interview with Sydney Watae, former Democracy and Governance Advisor to USAID-Zambia (1993-2015).

This illustration serves to stress a couple of points. First, understanding ideational context is fundamental for activism on sociologically entrenched phenomena like gender and disability. Assumptions of universal categories only serve to stifle progress in ideational transformations. To maximize their impact, transnational activists need, therefore, to avoid assuming that a knowledge paradigm generated in one cultural-cognitive context has universal resonance.

Second, while strengthening of institutions is important, and in fact, essential for sustained policy, political institutions are not always the best entry points for ideational transformation. The above illustration shows that informal community structures could be more impactful in proliferating alternative worldviews and in reversing historical frames about taken-for-granted social experiences. In African settings, elected leaders, frequently construed as “seasonal visitors” who show up near elections time, are often less trusted than community and religious leaders in norms-related issues. In countries like Malawi, Zambia, Botswana, and Ghana, traditional ethnic leaders and religious leaders wield both political and ideational authority over communities. They are influential normative spinners and can function as strategic ideational entrepreneurs for new knowledge shifts. They are better placed, socially, to be carriers of new disability frames and to be agents of ideational change than conventional political institutions. It is important, therefore, that transnational disability policy activists understand these socio-political dynamics and invest their resources where they would be most impactful.

To build an effective Afrocentric disability activism with local relevance, an appeal to the dominant and pre-existing communitarian sense of solidarity, family care, and social cohesion offers important promise. In their article “The politics of promoting social protection in

Zambia”, Kate Pruce and Sam Hickey found that solidarity principles, built on the strong tradition of family and social care and support for members at the local level, were the main support for the country’s welfare system (Hickey, 2007). Despite some challenging sociological factors, communal solidarity, which is a strong characteristic of many African societies, particularly the *Bantus* spread across southern Africa, is a profound opportunity for disability social policy development among African societies. Writing about American disability policy, and bemoaning the upsurge of individualism in American society, Ferguson and Ferguson (1995) highlight the importance of the mediatory functions of family structures in deinstitutionalization of disability.

In African societies, communitarianism is a given resource and an essential attribute of Africans’ worldview. As global disability social policy trends are shifting away from institutionalization, societies with strong family and social foundations and solidarity are at an advantage to implement informal disability support systems that de-emphasize isolation and stigma. At the advent of HIV/AIDS in the 1990s, African communities, among the worst affected globally, appealed to this philosophy, adopting home-based care of HIV/AIDS victims rather than institutionalized hospices. Today, global organizations combatting HIV/AIDS such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States’ President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and the United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), have acknowledged the profundity of home-based care as a niche not just for care, but also for combating social stigma and discriminatory sociological frames which prevented individuals from seeking voluntary HIV testing and treatment. Most HIV/AIDS programs now place home-based care at the core of care and policy organizations and activists attribute much of the success in reducing the pandemic through increased education about risky

behavior, reduced stigma, and improved care, to the home-based care model. Family and communal solidarity could be an equally important conceptual niche for turning around negative ideational frames, ending disability stigma, and for implementing successful disability programs. The Western-centric stress on individual rights does not fit into this ontological perspective.

## **8.7. Conclusion**

The need for bricolage and translation in gender and disability policy diffusion in Malawi and Zambia is implacable to enhance policy legitimacy and ideational sovereignty. Empirically, because of their unique historical, cultural, economic, religious, and political experiences that collectively shape the gender and disability experience in a unique way, the social contexts in Malawi and Zambia do not render themselves adequately amenable to the Western-centric legislative approach without addressing preliminary contextual factors. In disability policy, the existing approaches concentrating on legislative procedures and targeting political institutions for envisioned transformation, have proved to be futile, demanding alternative methodologies. Theoretically, social norms, understood as informal institutions, cannot change overnight through prescription of legislation. Unfortunately, as Grech (2011: 93) argues, the global South, and in this case Africa, has since colonial times been ‘construed as a blank slate, waiting for outside intervention’. As illustrated in the child marriage example above, social norms constitute identities and meanings that cannot be shifted or changed through legislation alone. As Scott (2005) argues, cultural cognition is an essential component of institutional design and meaning.

To begin to make disability policy pathways that crack deep into the Malawian and the Zambian societies’ social, cultural, historical, and philosophical foundations, translation and bricolage of ideas offer a more viable and tenacious promise as a mechanism for cultural and

ideological change and transformation. This change, through bricolage and translation operates not through political institutions, but primarily through civic bricoleurs at the societal level. While political institutions are often pliable to political and economic manipulation by the politically and economically powerful wielding political authority, they are socially ill-positioned to drive such bottom-up ideational innovation. In Malawi and Zambia, the data shows that traditional leaders, religious leaders, teachers, issue-based advocates, journalists and other social entrepreneurs are more impactful ideational spinners. It is among communities, families, and social groups and associations that disability frames are constituted and sustained. Civic educators are strategically positioned to reinforce or alter social beliefs, challenge epistemological positions, and to help re-align norms and values. For example, as evidenced in the data, transnational and domestic organizations that work to reverse trends of child marriage and domestic violence against women in Malawi and in Zambia, have realized, after decades of working through Western-centric legislative avenues with little success, that working through community players such as community chiefs and heads of religious organizations incorporating endogenous norms, values, and ideas, is more impactful.

A potential entry point for championing disability epistemic and policy influence in Malawi and Zambia is an appeal to the pre-existing communitarian sense of solidarity, family care, and social cohesion. Grech (2011) acknowledges the importance of family ties in offering solidarity and support to disabled people in the global South. This approach goes against the individual rights framework that Western models insist on. In Zambia and Malawi, life is built around communal identities and individual rights are circumscribed in social cohesion. In their research on social policy, Pruce and Hickey (2007) found that solidarity principles built on the strong tradition of family and social care and support for members at the local level, were the

main support for Zambia's welfare system. Communal solidarity, which is a strong characteristic of many African societies, is a profound opportunity for disability social policy development in African societies.

With the advent of HIV/AIDS in the 1990s, for example, African communities, among the worst affected globally, appealed to communitarian values, adopting home-based care for those with HIV/AIDS rather than institutionalized hospices. Today, global organizations combating HIV/AIDS such as the United States' President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS have acknowledged the profundity of home-based care as a niche not just for care, but also for combating social stigma and discriminatory practices preventing individuals from voluntarily seeking HIV testing and treatment. Most HIV/AIDS programs now place home-based care at the core, and policy organizations and activists attribute much of the success in reducing the pandemic through increased education about risky behavior, reduced stigma, and improved care, to the home-based care structure. Therefore, family and communal solidarity could be an important conceptual location for championing ideational enhancement or reform, fighting disability stigma, and implementing successful disability programs.

## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

The introduction of this chapter constitutes material used for the abstract of the following publication: Privilege Haang'andu. "Transnationalizing Disability Policy in Embedded Cultural-Cognitive Worldviews: The Case of Sub-Saharan Africa" in *Disability and the Global South*, Vol.5, No. 1, 1292-1314.

### 9.0. Introduction

In 2013, the European Union (EU) mission in Zambia made a public statement about its financial support to the LGBTI community. In panic and fear, LGBTI leaders urged the EU office to withdraw the statement and encouraged other transnational actors to instead offer discrete support to the LGBTI community. This anecdote is illustrative of the experiential gap between geopolitical groups confronting a similar policy issue. For TNAs, the rights of LGBTI persons are universally important; for the LGBTI community in the Zambian context, safety and discretion in a society guided by strong non-individualistic norms are more important.

This paradox illustrates the challenges facing the transnationalization of disability policy. How could we explain the fact that transnational disability actors, compared to their gender counterparts, have for the last two decades been trying to disseminate disability 'knowledge' and norms in southern Africa without corresponding policy and ideational success? This study examines this policy discrepancy. Advancing a constructivist argument, the study contends that disability transnational policy diffusion is largely built on colonial legacies of universalizing Western knowledge paradigms and that it has preoccupied itself with political institutional engagements at the expense of engaging context-specific sociological and ideological factors. This has resulted in sterile legislative exercises. To develop a truly southern African-relevant disability policy infrastructure, the study proposes the use of ideational bricolage and translation, a constructivist approach consisting of carefully adhering to and negotiating with context-specific ideational factors that inform the disability experience in this African region.



## **9.1. Main Research Findings**

The policy discourse on gender equality and human rights for persons with disabilities, as we have seen throughout this study, is dominated by a Western-centric ideological bias. First, this study reveals that both the gender and the disability policy terrain in the two countries is characterized by deep social factors that make it hard to apply universal and exogenous policy remedies. As the two empirical parts of this study (Chapters 6 and 7) reveal, the Western-centric approach to transnational policy diffusion is problematic. In both chapters, I find overwhelming evidence that social factors are dominant in the characterization of the experiences of persons with disabilities and in the gender relations in Malawi and in Zambia. Most prominent of these social factors across the cases and policy domains are religious beliefs, customs, entrenched worldviews, and traditional practices. These characterizations are not “perverted” attitudes but entrenched cultural attributes of these societies’ worldviews constituting their collective identities as societies. I also find evidence that the rural-urban divide has significance in the retention of hardline ideological, cultural, and customary identities. With the two countries’ disparities in levels of urbanization and demographic spread between rural and urban settings, there is a noticeable degree of variation in the pace of ideological evolution.

Second, this study reveals that both Malawi and Zambia have relatively good policy instruments (not applications) for enhancing disability social programs and for enhancing gender equality in response to the universalistic demands for disability rights and gender equality. While gender participants acknowledged robust efforts to implement complex policy remedies covering both institutional and social spheres, participants in disability policy overwhelmingly said implementation was poor and that political and institutional will was lacking. Above all, the participants said TNAs, governments, and DPOs were dominantly focused on institutional rather

than ideological reforms. Comparing the outcomes of the two approaches (the gender TNAs versus the disability TNAs), it is important to understand that the building of rules and laws as policy instruments does not always guarantee the production of desired policy change. It is evident that the ranking of TNA policy priorities in disability is influenced by the generic global CRPD outlook irrespective of the endogenous specificities that define the policy context.

Third, while gender TNAs record a resounding intermediate success, the same cannot be said about disability policy. Not only are disability TNAs' policy priorities not in sync with the empirical evidence about what matters the most with persons with disabilities' experiences; DPOs themselves are significantly fragmented to the extent they lack cohesiveness and common resolve. Instead, they compete, even fight amongst themselves. The same could not be said about gender policy advocates.

Therefore, by suggesting an alternative framework for transnational policy diffusion in disability and gender policies, this study attempts to shift the focus of both the theoretical and policy discourses on gender equality and disability away from explanations based on Western-centric institutional structure towards how social ideas, beliefs, cultural-cognitive factors, and historical legacies shape gender relations and the experience of disability. In so doing, the study seeks to explore how these dynamics determine a unique theoretical and policy terrain in southern Africa through the examples of Malawi and Zambia. This underscores one fundamental argument with multiple theoretical and policy lessons. The argument is that disability TNAs have been preoccupied with the Western-centric approach to policy transfer. Caught up in the individual rights approach, disability TNAs have paid insufficient attention to context-specifics about the experiences of persons with disabilities and to designing context-responsive policy interventions. This conclusion would have applied to gender TNAs if they had not overcome

sociological hurdles in their own diffusion processes. The political institutional approach, grounded in positivist thinking, assumes that reality is “empirically objective and value-free, and that laws or generalizations exist independently of social and historical context” (Fischer, 2003:118). Overlooked in this approach, is the recognition that historical contexts, normative dispositions, and cultural-cognitive factors frame and carry knowledge and, therefore, shape the experiences of societies, including those of disabled people.

By replacing the positivist Western-centric linear institutional engagement model with a constructivist approach that stresses bricolage and translation through socialization and rationalization, this study argues, therefore, that the universalization of Western-centric disability norms and policies is grounded in the distorting neo-colonial influences of epistemological, ontological and political power and ideological forces.

## **9.2. Implications for Existing Scholarship**

In the literature review in Chapter 2, I presented themes of literature representing different schools of thought regarding disability and about TNAs and policy diffusion. Regarding disability, I presented the three prominent schools of thought: the medical (Bury, 1996; Ingstad, 1995), charity (Shakespeare, 2006; Titchkosky, 2003), and the social (Aldersey, 2014; Michalko, 2009; Oliver, 1986; Stone, 1984; Vanhala, 2010) models. About TNAs and policy, I contrasted two methods of policy diffusion. One model is espoused by those that argue that TNAs leverage their political and economic power through conditionalities to coerce target countries to adopt and implement policies (e.g., Aina, Chachage, & Annan-Yao, 2004; and, Mosley, Harrigan, & Toye, 1991). The other model represents those that argue that TNAs are increasingly using ideational approaches to diffuse norms (e.g., Béland & Orenstein, 2013;

Orenstein, 2008; Risse & Sikkink, 1999). I further discussed how TNAs have advanced transnational disability norms and placed them at the center of global development. In all this, the point was to highlight the importance of TNAs in policy influence, both at the international and national levels and, particularly, to understand the role they have played in disability policy diffusion. Several scholars write about this increasing role played by TNAs in policy influence (e.g., Béland & Orenstein, 2013; Boli & Thomas, 1999; Checkel, 1997; Checkel, 2005; Evangelista, 1995; Finger & Princen, 2013; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Florini, 2012; Foli, 2016; Haas, 1992; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Klotz, 1999; Litfin, 1994; Price, 1998; Risse, 2007; Risse-Kappen, 1995; Willetts, 1996).

From these endeavors, I identify and address two conceptual gaps. First, the literature does not conceptualize what accounts for TNAs variation in performance across policy domains in the same socio-political environments. Second, most TNAs and human rights activists go about the transnationalization of international norms as though they were an authentic and disinterested spreading of inherent and universal rights, oblivious to socio-cultural, epistemological, and historical heterogeneity.

The contribution this study makes is threefold. First, it strives to determine the circumstances under which TNAs succeed and/or fail to diffuse transnational norms in an ideationally charged socio-political environment. Second, through a hermeneutic process, it abstracts the implications of underlying power factors in policy diffusion. Here, the study propounds the ideational and policy implications of a policy exchange situation that is characterized by power asymmetries. Third, this study bridges complex disability and public policy theories to devise an explanatory framework for policy diffusion that could be applied to many policy situations. Through Parsons' (2007) notion of ideational explanations, I have

abstracted ideational components of the Malawian and Zambian societies and how they define these societies' identities in explaining their actions. Using Campbell's (2004) concepts of bricolage and translation, I devise a three-step approach to ideational localization (socialization, rationalization, and institutionalization) of policy diffusion.

The constructivist argument I advance for disability policy diffusion based on ideational considerations, and against a purely positivist political institutional approach, adds a novel approach both to disability literature and to transnational policy diffusion thought. This constructivist approach stands in contrast to the dominant and often-unquestioned political-institutional paradigm of the transnationalization of the disability discourse which, if anything, overlooks context-specific cultural and ideational factors by assuming universality of Western geopolitical ideologies, norms, and interests to southern Africa. Through strong emphasis on the importance of ideas, social meanings, as well as historical and cultural identities in disability policy design and implementation, this study contributes to constructivist theory-building in public policy research. Shifting from the "universal" categories and their Western-centric biases, this study proposes an Afrocentric approach to disability policy design in southern Africa, which is more responsive to the unique local ideational and experiential foundations. I argue that engaging sociological factors is more likely to yield successful policy diffusion at the level of Hall's third order change, than mere change of documents (signing treaties, and promulgating policy positions) by political players likely for perverse political incentives.

### **9.3. Policy Implications**

There are several factors of significance to disability policy and transnational policy that emerge from this study. Here I focus on four. First, the role of political and economic power in policy

transfer is important. Differences in political and economic power between two policy parties (i.e., states) can be serious causes of ideological asymmetries and introduce perverse incentives for policy change. Not only could the dominant party succeed in policy change based on their ideological and normative terms, but the other party could be disposed more to ideological acquiescence than persuasion (Booth, 2011). The problem, as seen with many African countries, is that acceptability of international treaties comes with significant financial incentives that has no correspondence with real normative change at the societal level beyond the change of policy instruments. In the post-industrial global economy where some countries' needs continue to be sustained by Western donors, economic aid can play a significant role in the change of policy instruments, perhaps not as much in societal ideational disposition. Nonetheless, economic incentives provide a potential explanation for why some countries accept policy proposals made by powerful economic and political forces. Policy interactions must always have a power-check. When power plays aren't checked, policy ownership and, therefore, genuine ideological revolution is not guaranteed. Power distorts outcomes.

Second, beyond the much-celebrated political institutional engagement approach, disability policy scholars have an important and urgent task to reconceptualise and ground transnational disability policy diffusion. For example, in this study, I observe that the rural-urban divide was sensitive to levels to which ethnically-entrenched societies were amenable to ideological and normative change. Urban people, despite valuing their customs and cultural heritage, were more easily convinced about universalistic approaches to life than the more rural. This study has shown that theory and policy are inextricably embedded in a web of social meanings produced and reproduced through cultural practices and social discourse. Evidently, the political institutional engagement model's reach in diverse cultural-cognitive, historical, and

normative contexts is limited. Policy scholars, therefore, have the duty to build disability policy diffusion theories that sufficiently project policy context heterogeneities to enable policy entrepreneurs to responsively frame policies.

As I persistently argued in this study, laws are only but policy instruments. Policy instruments find their legitimacy and effectiveness in the social norms that make these policies administrable, acceptable, and respected. The need for disability TNAs to emulate the gender TNA advocates in coupling institutional and ideological change towards policy change cannot be over emphasized.

Third, a factor that prominently stands out is the contrast between what is believed to be the major problem and the direction of TNA-government focus of resources. It is striking, perhaps surprising, that TNAs and most stakeholders in disability policy insist on the western human rights approach to disability policy despite strong indicators about the effect of social factors on the experience of persons with disabilities. It is hard to explain the contrast between the evidence of what defines the experience of persons with disability and where TNAs and the governments decide to focus their resources. Logically, policy actors must act to maximize policy yields where it matters the most.

Fourth, the organizational fragmentation among DPOs has important policy implications that TNAs need to take seriously. As can be seen from the cohesion among gender advocates, strong mobilization is important not just for unison, but for putting pressure of political actors to raise political risks when political actors do not commit to the cause, and for putting pressure on ideological leaders like religious and traditional leaders who are gate-keepers to customs, belief systems, normative narratives that societies live by. For transnational actors, policy should not just be about the rule of law; nor should it just be about financing designed programs. It must

also encompass the understanding of intricate organizational dynamics that govern interest group mobilization. For example, DPOs have amongst themselves very sophisticated politics that could injure their common interest. Without understanding what causes conflicts between wheelchair users and the blind, TNAs could only continue to fund fragmented interests without achieving comprehensive policy and ideological revolutions. While DPOs should build organizations for solidarity, they should confluence their individual, disability-specific goals with common disability goals that affect all persons with disabilities. Without understanding what underlies the organizational disputes among DPOs, resource competitions, niche building, and branding for resource attraction, TNAs would feed into the fragmentations and be themselves part of the organizational failure rather than agents of remedy.

Finally, as I acknowledged in the introductory chapters, disability remains a very complex phenomenon, primarily because it is a concrete lived experience and not merely an academic subject. Policy makers and scholars need to approach this policy terrain cautiously to avoid the pitfalls of homogenization of experiences and ideationally offensive and ineffective policy prescriptions. Therefore, innovative as this approach might be, its precepts must be modestly applied.

#### **9.4. Limitations**

This study has three main limitations. The main one is the number of cases it examines. While two cases can generate a lot of important comparative variables, the generalizability of comparative study results also depends on the extensiveness of investigation. Despite the intensity of this study, and the scientific significance of its findings for both disability policy and for transnational policy diffusion, there is no doubt that a broader representation of cases with a



wider range of internal variation could have enhanced the validity of the findings. The second challenge is the cause of the first. A study of this magnitude certainly needs more time to cover more ground, both geographically and conceptual-wise. This is certainly something I will pursue for the next foreseeable future.

Third, this study bridges two broad areas of disability and policy diffusion studies. While both of these areas have significant theoretical resources, there is almost no evidence of intersectionality between them to draw from. As such, this scholarly vacuum made it harder to draw from existing examples and comparatives. At the same time, it allowed me the latitude to explore the uncharted field and to go deep into policy studies to draw important concepts like Hall's policy paradigms and Campbell's institutional change.

## **9.5. Agenda for Future Research**

I started this research with a set of three objectives. To recap, my three objectives were, first, to demonstrate that ideas matter in transnational policy diffusion and to create an ideational niche for evaluating disability policy diffusion in southern Africa. Second, this study sought to destabilize the often-unquestioned ideological proliferation of Western-centric activist agendas. Rather than take it at its face value, this study aimed to expose the often power-laden dynamics that underlie policy and ideational transfer. Third, the study sought to develop a policy design paradigm responsive to the socio-economic and political challenges of persons with disability in southern Africa. Here, the study sought to challenge the assumption that policy ideas promulgated at the transnational level should apply the same way to all contexts. To achieve this, this study wove through intricate scholarly thoughts that expose political, cultural,

epistemological, and ontological elements that undergird ideas and the subsequent policy conceptions they beget.

While this research, to a large extent, meets these objectives, the comparative study of policy diffusion could benefit from further research work. Indeed, two countries in southern Africa, despite the richness of the variables they exhibit, are insufficient to make broad conclusions about policy diffusion in the region. Future research could take more robust representation of cases with a greater level of variation of factors, including colonial legacy (e.g., including a former French, Belgian, and Portuguese colonies) to see: (i) if political historicity has any influence on policy diffusion behavior by TNA; and (ii) if colonial legacies have significance in local societies' disposition to exogenous influence.

Second, future research should examine what the dynamics of policy diffusion in a much less ethnolinguistically fractionalized society such as Zimbabwe or Botswana would be. Here, it would be useful to investigate whether less fractionalized societies are more or less cohered to social identities such as culture, belief systems, and norms. It would also be useful to know whether such societies are ideologically more amenable to political institutional influence than the more heterogeneous ones. Third, the study of more than two different policy areas with significant non-African origins could give strong comparative results. The study of policy change and policy diffusion, despite it having good theoretical frameworks such as those by Hall (1993), Campbell (2004), Thelen (2009), and Pearson (2001), remains quite elusive. Coupling this with disability policy was both academically invigorating and challenging. Certainly, similar innovativeness could enrich both fields and others that could benefit from such comparative approaches.

Further research should also examine differences in the progression of disability policy design and implementation among various southern African countries, ascertaining sets of key players and their respective influence both in policy advancements and sociological ideational reforms at the local level. Another factor that needs further attention is the study of normative similarities among African *Bantu* societies to test if a generalizable activist model within certain African communities would apply and to see the extent to which more than few such models would be required. Scholars like Mji (2011) and Livingston (2011) suggest more Afrocentric convergence than diversity on key communitarian normative values, suggesting viability of a more unified Afrocentric activism thrust. This suggestion could be an important starting point for a unique Afrocentric paradigm of disability policy. This dissertation is an important step towards that realization. Most importantly the theoretical propositions this dissertation makes, once corroborated with further research, could be replicated in broader ideational settings on other policy topics. Finally, despite the bleak picture the findings paint about transnational policy diffusion, this dissertation casts hope that policy diffusion across knowledge domains and geopolitical frontiers could potentially occur on less asymmetrical terms once vested interests in policy processes are unmasked and challenged.

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## APPENDICES

### *Appendix A: Summary of the Disability Act 2012 of the Republic of Malawi and Introduction to Supporting Legislation*

The Disability Act of Malawi was adopted on May 24, 2012, repealing its precursor, the 1971 Handicapped Persons Act. While the Handicapped Persons Act of 1971 was modeled on the medical understanding of disability, the Disability Act of 2012 builds on the social model. The Disability Act of 2012 (hereafter, the Act) is divided into six parts. While Part I stipulates the interpretations of key terminology such as accessibility, disability, and equalization of opportunities, Part II provides for the general adoption of policies and legislation for the achievement of rights of persons with disabilities. The Act here acknowledges the important roles of the private sector and civil society in protecting and promoting rights of persons with disability. It gives powers to the minister to set up committees and establishes the Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA), generally referred to as “the Agency” throughout the Act. The Act stipulates that The Agency will be an arm of Government and will be responsible for the promotion of the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. It will also advise the minister on all matters affecting persons with disabilities, register persons with disabilities, and regulate relevant organizations.

In Part III, the Act provides administration of protections of rights of persons with disability. The Act designates the Minister in charge of the affairs of persons with disabilities as the main designation for establishing enforcement mechanisms of the Act.<sup>76</sup> In Part III, the Act places obligations on the Government to ensure that those rights are enjoyed by persons with

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<sup>76</sup> Since December 1998 until June 2014 Malawi had a line ministry responsible for disability issues. When the ministry was abolished, the Department of Disability and Elderly Affairs within the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare was established. Its main role was to deal with disability and elderly affairs.

disabilities.

Part IV concretely stipulates protections and rights of persons with disabilities. The Act provides for non-discrimination based on disability in, among others, healthcare, education, accessibility to the physical environment, transportation services, information, housing, and employment.

Most importantly, the Malawian Government commits to meeting the obligations towards people with disabilities, including the provision of free and equitable education and healthcare. The Act also stipulates liabilities and sanctions to any violations of rights of persons with disabilities, including fines and imprisonment.

Part V provides for the establishment of the Disability Trust Fund from grants, donations, and contributions for purposes of implementing and supporting programs aimed at mainstreaming disability and promoting inclusion.

Part VI contains miscellaneous provisions such as restrictions on seeking contributions from the public to avoid abuse by individuals, organizations of and for persons with disabilities, and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It also provides for the investigations to be carried out by the minister or any designated agency where violations of the Act are reported.

Part VI also stipulates the powers of the Agency to impose administrative penalties for some offences under the Act, and powers of the minister to make regulations and repeal of the Handicapped Persons Act.

Malawi also has other pieces of legislation that support the functioning of representative organizations of persons with disabilities. Among them are the Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVETA) Act, 1999; the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, 2010 which provides for the registration of children with disabilities at local government level and the NGO Act of 2000 which regulates the functioning of Non-Governmental

Organizations in the country. The Local Government Act of 2010 also provides for the inclusion of a representative of persons with disabilities in the local councils as a non-elected councilor. However, the inclusion of such a representative is at the discretion of the local council. Further, Malawi has a National Policy for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities adopted in 2006. This Disability Policy is under review to sync it with the Disability Act of 2012.

### ***Appendix B: Malawi's Gender Policy – Summary***

In 2015, the Government of the Republic of Malawi finalized its National Gender Policy. The 2015 version is a build-up to the 2000-2005 National Gender Policy the country had. According to the document, it draws from existing regional and international instruments that Malawi is party to. The chief goal of the policy is to mainstream gender in the national development process to enhance participation of women and men, girls and boys for sustainable and equitable development. Observing the persistence of gender inequalities and under representation of women in decision making positions at all levels despite constitutional guarantees for equal rights for all citizens, the government decided to introduce a policy that would augment its efforts and those of stakeholders to equilibrate its population. The National Gender Policy has six core objectives for gender mainstreaming: (a) To advocate for increased access, retention and completion to quality education for girls and boys; (b) To ensure women, men, boys and girls' sexual and reproductive health rights, and HIV/AIDS status are improved; (c) To strengthen gender mainstreaming in all sectors of the economy; (d) To reduce poverty among women and other vulnerable groups (Orphans, widows, persons with disabilities, and the elderly) through economic empowerment; (e) To promote women's participation in decision making positions in both politics and public life; and (f) To reduce gender based violence.

In each of the above core pillars, the government prescribes measures to level the participation of men and women to achieve balanced economic, social, political, and cultural development. In addition to these affirmative policy positions, the Malawi Constitution, while guaranteeing rights to every citizen, specifically guarantees women's rights. The Constitution acknowledges that violence against women is a problem that needs to be eradicated from society. The Bill of Rights enshrines gender equity, inheritance and guidelines on family and marriage.

The National Gender Policy, therefore, is aimed at accelerating the realization of women's rights as enshrined in the Malawi Constitution in ensuring equal participation of women and men at all levels of governance and the enjoyment of their human rights.

***Appendix C: Summary of the Disability Act 2012 of the Republic of Zambia and Introduction to Supporting Legislation***

Zambia's Persons with Disability Act (PDA) of 2012 repeals its pre-existing law, the Disabilities Act of 1996. In addition to improving the repealed 1996 law, the PDA of 2012 reaffirms the existence and functions of the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (generally referred to as The Agency, in the PDA) as the main governing and administrative body for channeling disability policy in Zambia. The PDA is divided into ten parts. In Part I, the PDA stipulates the contextual interpretation of key terms used, such as, Agency, affirmative action, institution and many more. In this part, the PDA also guides that its provisions are superior to any preceding legislation and that, should any existing legislation present contradiction with regards to rights of persons with disabilities, the PDA should prevail.

Part II spells out specific social obligations towards persons with disabilities, namely: (a) respect for inherent dignity of persons with disabilities, individual autonomy including the freedom to make choices and independence of persons; (b) non-discrimination; (c) recognition as persons before the law; (d) respect for physical and mental integrity; (e) independent living; (f) full and effective participation and inclusion in society; (g) respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity; (h) equality of opportunity; (i) accessibility; (j) gender equality; (k) respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities; and (l) respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

Part III of the PDA re-creates the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities as if created under the PDA. The PDA defines who should constitute the Agency's board, pulling representatives from core government ministries. The Agency is given the sole statutory mandate

to plan, implement, and promote programs that enhance rights of persons with disabilities.

Part IV of the PDA stipulates the functions of the minister under which the disability portfolio falls. The PDA tasks the minister to take policy measures to achieve the full social integration of person with disabilities in Zambia through the provision of access to habilitation and rehabilitation services, education, health, training and employment, and through the creation of an environment that enables persons with disabilities to lead independent lives.

Part V outlines the protections and promotions of persons with disabilities, primarily summed up in guaranteeing inclusive education at all levels; ensuring access for persons with disabilities to health services that are gender sensitive and to health-related rehabilitation. The PDA requires that all health services provided to persons with disabilities be of equal quality as those provided to non-disabled, and that the services be as close as possible to the communities of beneficiaries. Further, the minister, in collaboration with state institutions and non-governmental organizations, is obligated to organize, strengthen, and extend comprehensive habilitation and rehabilitation services and programs for persons with disabilities. In addition, the PDA provides safeguards for employment and social protection. It prohibits discrimination based on disability in the workplace in, among others, determining employment, remuneration, and career progression. Further, the minister in charge of people with disabilities' affairs, working with the minister in charge of transport, works and communication, is guided to ensure equal accessibility and mobility to the physical environment as well as elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility in all areas of public access.

Part VI provides for regulation of institutions and organizations that provide services to persons with disabilities. The PDA requires that all such bodies be registered with the Agency and adhere to the provisions of the PDA and to the regulatory standards prescribed by the



Agency. The PDA also requires institutions of learning that admit persons with disability to establish a special fund for repairs, servicing, and purchase of assistive devices, technical aids and appliances for persons with disabilities.

Part VII establishes the National Trust Fund for Persons with disabilities. Its funds shall come from parliamentary appropriations, donors, gifts and grants. The PDA does not stipulate the use of this funds; instead, it grants the minister rights to determine appropriate use in consultation with trustees.

Part VIII establishes the Inspectorate whose mandate is to inspect any designated institutions for compliance with provisions of the PDA. It also stipulates liabilities and penalties for failure to comply and/or to obstruct inspection processes. Part IX outlines the offences and penalties for family concealment of persons with disabilities; negligence causing disability; and giving false information to seek registration for benefits.

Finally, in Part X, the PDA repeals the Persons with Disabilities Act of 1996. It also gives broad statutory powers to the minister to regulate the conduct of actors in the disability sector. The minister may prescribe anything required to be prescribed under the PDA for the better carrying out of the requirements of the PDA.

#### ***Appendix D: Zambia's National Gender Policy – Summary***

The 2014 National Gender Policy of Zambia is the revised version of the National Gender Policy of 2000. Unlike the 2000 version that focused on repealing and amending discriminatory legislation, increasing access to and control over productive resources and the enhanced access to and utilization of information and technology, the 2014 version gives a strong mandate to the Ministry of Gender and Child Development and other ministries to mainstream gender in their operations. This new Policy acknowledges the many achievements made in balancing gender opportunities and participation in Zambia since 2000. Some of the achievements include: (i) The enactment of the Anti-Gender Based Violence Act No. 1 of 2011 and the Matrimonial Causes Act No. 20 of 2007; (ii) Establishment of the institutional framework that led to the creation of the Ministry of Gender and Child Development; (iii) Creation of the engendering mechanisms in the public service; and (iv) Execution of several affirmative action policies especially in education.

The revised Policy spells out the following seven core avenues for redressing the observed policy gaps:

- (i) Enhance gender audits and plans of action based on outstanding issues from the previous policy which include: changing socio-economic landscape, persistence of feminization of poverty, rising gender dynamics in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, increased incidences of gender-based violence, human trafficking, negative impact of climate change on women and children, and increased involvement of women in drug trafficking;
- (ii) Promote revision of policies, programs and legislation;
- (iii) Foster awareness campaigns on gender issues in communities;

- (iv) Empower women by facilitating participation in education and economic activities;
- (v) Address issues that hinder women's rights such as gender-based violence (GBV), forced early-child marriages and child-teenage pregnancies;
- (vi) Tackle gender-related land issues; and
- (vii) Foster adherence to reproductive health rights especially for women and girls.

The most important change is that these target activities now fall under the Ministry of Gender and Child Development whose statutory mandate is to implement the National Gender Policy, the National Child Policy, and Streetism Policy. In implementing these three policy instruments, the Policy stipulates six guiding principles: gender equity and equality, a rights-based approach to national development, accountability for gender mainstreaming in the implementation of policies and programs, upholding of core cultural values and practices that promote the respect for both women and men, transparency and affirmative action.

The main objectives of the revised National Gender Policy can be summed up into fifteen points.

- (i) The facilitation of research on current gender issues to generate information for documentation and decision making. This would result into stronger institutional capacities to monitor and evaluate policies across sectors;
- (ii) Mainstreaming of gender in all national policies, programs and legislation to achieve gender equality programming;
- (iii) Domestication of the provisions of ratified regional and international instruments on gender and development to ensure gender responsive policies and laws;
- (iv) The curbing of traditional and cultural practices which inhibit the advancement of

women, men and children. After engaging young people in negative cultural practices, the Policy aims to enhance girls' education;

- (v) Ensuring increased participation of women in decision making at all levels of development in the public and private sectors;
- (vi) Increasing access to quality education and skills development for all by engendering education and skills development;
- (vii) Enhance accessibility to cost effective quality and gender responsive health care services for all;
- (viii) Ensuring equitable access to affordable renewable energy, clean and safe water as well as sanitation services;
- (ix) Reduction of extreme poverty and destitution among vulnerable groups especially women and girls by revising and expanding existing social protection mechanisms;
- (x) Reduction of GBV through implementation of policies, programs and law aimed at eradicating GBV and the promotion of female and male partnership in the fight against and prevention of GBV;
- (xi) Promotion of women's participation in transportation and construction business value chain through technical skills development and entrepreneurship;
- (xii) Increase understanding of the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and to develop engendered remedial mechanisms;
- (xiii) Ensuring equitable allocation of productive resources to women and men, especially agricultural land and business ownership;

## *Appendix E: Participant Consent Form*

### *Point-form Consent Form Template*

### *Participant Consent Form*



**You are invited to participate in a research study entitled:** Transnational Actors and Disability Policy: Ideational Pathways Towards Successful Transnational Policy Diffusion in Southern Africa

**Researcher(s):** Privilege Haang'andu, PhD Candidate, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Saskatchewan, Phone: +1 306 914 5350, Email: [prh146@mail.usask.ca](mailto:prh146@mail.usask.ca)

**Supervisor:** Dr. Daniel Béland, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, Phone: +1 306 966 1272, Email: [Daniel.beland@usask.ca](mailto:Daniel.beland@usask.ca)

#### **Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:**

- This research seeks to understand processes of domesticating and implementing international disability norms as well as approaches to the attainment of MDG 3 in Zambia and Malawi. To do that, the research needs to consult international organizations and domestic policy experts and advocates about their understanding of these processes. Participants will range from international organizations such as UN agencies, human rights organizations, local advocates, and individual members of parliament. From international organizations, government, civil society, and statutory bodies, the study seeks to understand their policy priorities regarding both disability policy and MDG 3, including precise programs undertaken to achieve their goals. From advocates, to understand the underlying social narratives that inform the disability and gender disparity discourses. The study has the following objectives:
- To understand the underlying narratives that define disability and gender positions in society;
- To understand how policy actors, both international and domestic, respond to these sociological factors; to understand how institutional processes resolve sociological factors confounding progression in disability and gender rights;

- To identify factors that account for success in gender advocacy and those that bedevil the disability discourse;
- To seek opportunities to enhance policy design for transnational disability policy diffusion.

### **Procedures:**

- The procedure of this interview is as follows. I will ask you about six brief questions. Please feel free to explain more than the question suggests, especially if you prefer to provide some background to your answer. I will record your responses in writing as well as with my audio recording device. The interview will take place in an office. There will be no other person except the two of us. The interview will last about an hour.
- Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

**Funded by:** This research is not funded by any organization or individual. It is entirely meant for academic purposes for the completion of a doctorate in public policy.

### **Potential Risks:**

- There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. However, if during the interview you experience any emotional distress, please feel free to let me know and we will discontinue the interview.
- When this study is completed, and results produced, I will share the findings with you through our mutually agreed contact. If you prefer to receive the findings directly from me, please provide me with your email contact at the end of the interview.

### **Potential Benefits:**

- This research has several benefits to you and to the Zambian/Malawian society in general. First, it will help provide policy feedback to the government and to the legislature on the need to pay closer attention to local contexts in designing effective disability policies. Second, this research offers an opportunity for organizations that advocate for disabled people to engage with social frames as well as with other processes. This study will also contribute to the larger public policy discourse on disability policy. I hope that it will raise the need for more context-specific research to enable governments respond to more targeted needs as opposed to relying on global theories of disability.

### **Compensation:**

- Your participation is entirely voluntary and there are no material inducements provided.

### **Confidentiality:**

- My university has strict policies about safeguarding the confidentiality of research

participants. Whatever feedback you provide will remain anonymous and strictly confidential. Although you will sign this form, your name will not be reflected in the report unless you so wish.

- The information that you share will be reported in written and audio forms. All the paperwork, including the forms that you will sign, will be stored in the university storage where only my supervisor and I will have access. When the data is no longer required, it will be destroyed.

**Right to Withdraw:**

- Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until October 28, 2019. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred, and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

**Follow up:**

- The results of this study will provisionary be ready by October 28, 2019. To obtain results from the study, please get in touch with me or through our mutually agreed contact who arranged this interview. If you have access to email, please email me after that date using the email at the top of page 1.

**Questions or Concerns:**

- If you have any questions or concerns after our interview, please contact me using the information at the top of page 1.
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board on \_\_\_\_\_. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office [ethics.office@usask.ca](mailto:ethics.office@usask.ca) +1-306-966-2975 (collect).

**Consent:** Signed Consent

**I grant permission to be audio taped: Yes: \_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_**

**A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.**

I read and explained this Consent Form to the participant before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name of Participant*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Researcher's Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

## *Appendix F: Ethics Applications - Malawi*

Privilege Haang'andu  
Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy  
University of Saskatchewan  
Diefenbaker Building  
101 Diefenbaker Place, Saskatoon, SK, Canada  
S7N 5B8

NCRSH Secretariat  
Division of Health, Social Sciences and Humanities  
National Commission for Science and Technology  
Lingadzi House  
P/Bag B303  
LILONGWE 3  
Malawi

May 28, 2018

Dear Dr./Sir/Madam,

### Ref: Ethics Application for Research on Disabilities and Gender Policies in Malawi

My name is Privilege Haang'andu. I am a doctoral student at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy in Saskatchewan, Canada. I am currently in Zambia conducting research on international organizations' support to the government and civil society organizations in advancing gender equality and disability inclusion. My research covers Zambia and Malawi. While I conduct research in Zambia, my research assistant, Mr. Isaac Nkhoma, will assist me gather some data through interviews in Malawi. During this research, I would like to learn about the many good works the international community, the Government and civil society organizations are doing to advance gender equality and disability inclusion in social-economic planning and development. My research also seeks to understand the social attitudes to gender and disability and how they relate with the prevailing policy environment.

I write to formally request your expedited approval to conduct this research in Malawi. I have learnt at a very late stage about the legal requirement to seek ethical approval from the NCRSH. Please accept my apology for the oversight. As indicated in the consent form approved by the University of Saskatchewan, please note that participation is completely voluntary and not obligatory. Please note that there are no monetary or material incentives for participation. The



research is a component of my doctoral program and it is not funded by any organization. I am very positive that the overall benefit of the project will impact positively on disability policy in Malawi and on national development.

Please find attached a copy of ethics approval for this research from the University of Saskatchewan; my research proposal approved by the University of Saskatchewan; the consent form for participants, and my Curriculum Vitae.

Thank you most sincerely for accepting my application.

Sincerely yours,

Privilege Haang'andu

***Appendix G: Malawi Ethics Approval***



**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

Lingadzi House  
Robert Mugabe Crescent  
P/Bag B303  
City Centre  
Lilongwe

Tel: +265 1 771 550  
+265 1 774 189  
+265 1 774 869  
Fax: +265 1772 431  
Email: [directorgeneral@ncst.mw](mailto:directorgeneral@ncst.mw)  
Website: <http://www.ncst.mw>

**NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND  
HUMANITIES**

**Ref No: NCST/RTT/2/6**

**13<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

Mr. Privilege Haang'andu,

1217 Avenue J South,

Saskatoon SK,

Canada 57M2C3,

Email: [privahaangandu@gmail.com](mailto:privahaangandu@gmail.com)

Dear Mr. Haang'andu,

**RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR  
PROTOCOL P.05/18/276: TRANSNATIONAL ACTORS AND DISABILITY POLICY:  
IDEATIONAL PATHWAYS TOWARDS SUCCESSFUL TRANSNATIONAL POLICY  
DIFFUSION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the

National Committee on Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NCRSH) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalised, you are required to furnish the Committee and the Commission with a final report of the study. The committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,

**NCRSH ADMINISTRATOR  
HEALTH, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES DIVISION**

**For: CHAIRMAN OF NCRSH**

**Committee Address:**

*Secretariat, National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities, National Commission for Science and Technology, Lingadzi House, City Centre, P/Bag B303, Capital City, Lilongwe3, Malawi. Telephone Nos: +265 771 550/774 869; E-mail address: [ncrsh@ncst.mw](mailto:ncrsh@ncst.mw)*

## *Appendix H: Interview Questions*

**University of Saskatchewan  
Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy  
PhD Program**

*Candidate: Privilege Haang'andu*

*Supervisor: Daniel Beland, PhD*

*April – July 2018 Field Research in Malawi and in Zambia*

Why has transnational disability policy diffusion in Southern Africa been less successful than other TNA policy engagements? Put differently, and in a broader way, why do some TNA policy diffusion efforts succeed while others fail within the same political environment?

Therefore, the interviews will be centered on understanding the exact approaches that TNAs employed in diffusing policy in the two policy domains.

### **Interview Questions:**

#### **MDG 3:**

(i) The UN adopted gender equality as one of its MDG priorities. This has continued even through the SDGs. **What does your organization see as the basic indicators of gender inequality in the Zambian society?**

(ii) What programs did international organizations support/fund to help the Zambian government achieve MDG 3? You can give an example of the outstanding 3-5.

(iii) What programs did your organization roll out towards the achievement of MDG 3?

(iv) What are some of the cultural challenges with gender equality in Zambia?

(v) On a continuum of influence with culture on one end and institutional make up on the other, where would you place the weight of each in accounting for gender imbalances (manifested in various ways – education, GBV, child marriage, etc.) in Zambia?

---

100% (Culture)	0	100% (institutions)
----------------	---	---------------------

(vi) What (if any) programs were designed/supported to address these challenges?

(vii) looking back 18 years ago when MDGs were launched, how do you assess the progress towards gender equality? (a) minimal change (b) intermediate/medium change (c) significant change

(viii) In the work your organization does on gender programming and support, do you have specific programs for women with disabilities? If you do, please tell me about them?

(ix) What are the major social factors disadvantaging women with disabilities?

**Disability policy:**

(i) Please tell me what your organization's main goals are in the disability advocacy?

(ii) What are the main challenges facing people with disabilities in Zambia?

(iii) What have been the priority programs for donors and the Zambian Government for people with disabilities?

(iv) What are some of the cultural challenges with disability equality in Zambia?

(v) On a continuum of influence with culture/norms on one end and institutional make up on the other, where would you place the weight of each in accounting for gender imbalances (manifested in various ways – education, GBV, child marriage, etc.) in Zambia?

---

100% (Culture and norms)	0	100% (institutions)
--------------------------	---	---------------------

(vi) What (if any) programs were designed/supported to address these challenges?

(vii) What would you say are the three main objectives driving disability rights advocacy in Malawi/Zambia today? (cultural and normative overhaul; legislative protections)

(viii) How have international organizations helped support government address cultural/social stereotypes/context-specific challenges of disability?

(ix) In most cases, disability and poverty co-exist, especially in the global South. How do international actors/donors manage this tension in funding and programming priorities? Do they support more rights-oriented legislation or respond to material poverty of people with disabilities?

Thank you for the time and your deep insights.

*Appendix I: Samples Letters for Interview Request*

Privilege Haang'andu  
Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy  
University of Saskatchewan  
Diefenbaker Building  
101 Diefenbaker Place, Saskatoon, SK, Canada  
S7N 5B8  
Email: [privahaangandu@gmail.com](mailto:privahaangandu@gmail.com)

Ambassador.....  
Head of the European Union Delegation to Zambia  
4899 Los Angeles Boulevard, Longacres  
Lusaka, Zambia

April 20, 2018

Your Excellency,

Ref: Request for Interview on EU projects in Support of Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion

My name is Privilege Haang'andu. I am a doctoral student at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy in Saskatchewan, Canada. I am currently in the country to conduct research on international organizations' support to local governments and organizations in advancing gender equality and disability inclusion.

Sir, I write to request your authorization to interview one of your staff in the governance and social sectors on this subject. This research is a component of my doctoral program and it is not funded by any organization. This research is guided and bound by the University of Saskatchewan's ethics board that stipulates responsible research conduct. Please find attached a copy of the ethics approval. I have also enclosed a copy of the consent form I would need signed by your staff I will interview.

Thank you most sincerely, Your Excellency, for authorizing this interview. I look forward to hearing from your office soon.

Sincerely yours,

Privilege Haang'andu

Privilege Haang'andu  
Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy  
University of Saskatchewan  
Diefenbaker Building  
101 Diefenbaker Place, Saskatoon, SK, Canada  
S7N 5B8  
Email: [privahaangandu@gmail.com](mailto:privahaangandu@gmail.com)  
Local mobile: +260-966-080-250

Country Representative  
UNICEF - Zambia

Lusaka, Zambia

April 20, 2018

Your Excellency,

Ref: Request for Interview on EU projects in Support of Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion

My name is Privilege Haang'andu. I am a doctoral student at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy in Saskatchewan, Canada. I am currently in the country to conduct research on international organizations' support to local governments and organizations in advancing gender equality and disability inclusion. During this research, I would like to learn about the many good works the international community, the Zambian Government and civil society organizations are doing to advance gender equality and disability inclusion in social-economic planning and development. My research also seeks to understand the social attitudes to gender and disability and how they relate with the prevailing policy environment.



I write to request your authorization to interview one of your staff in the governance and social sectors on this subject. This research is a component of my doctoral program and it is not funded by any organization. This research is guided and bound by the University of Saskatchewan's ethics board. Please find attached a copy of the ethics approval certificate. I have also enclosed a copy of the consent form I would need signed by your staff I will interview.

Thank you most sincerely, Your Excellency, for authorizing this interview. I look forward to hearing from your office soon.

Sincerely yours,

Privilege Haang'andu

## *Appendix J: Details About Participants*

### **J. 1. List and Details about Interview Participants**

Name of Participant	Country	Interviewer	Date of Interview	Language of interviewing
Family Fellowship Global Ministry	Zambia	Privilege Haang'andu (PH)	May 28, 2018	English
Joint Country Program (Danish and Norwegian Church Aid)	Zambia	PH	May 14, 2018	English
A European Embassy	Zambia	PH	April 20, 2018	English
UN Agency	Zambia	PH	May 11, 2018	English
Women for Change	Zambia	PH	April 23, 2018	English
Zambia National Women's Lobby	Zambia	PH	April 30, 2018	English
Women and Law in Southern Africa	Zambia	PH	May 2, 2018	English
Organization of Western Embassies	Zambia	PH	April 20, 2018	English
Islam and Women – Islamic leader	Malawi	PH and Isaac Nkhoma (IN)	June 12, 2018	English
Center for Youth Empowerment	Malawi	PH and IN	June 11, 2018	English

and Civic Education				
GIZ	Malawi	PH	June 11, 2018	English
OXFAM	Malawi	PH and IN	June 12, 2018	English
UNFPA	Malawi	PH and IN	June 13, 2018	English
Center for Human Rights and Rehabilitation	Malawi	IN		English
Tilitonse Foundation	Malawi	IN		English
Church of Central Africa Presbyterian	Malawi	PH and IN		English
Non-Governmental Organization Gender Coordination Coalition	Malawi	IN		English
Special Hope Foundation	Zambia	PH	May 26, 2018	English
UN Agency 1	Zambia	PH	May 15, 2018	English
UN Agency 2	Zambia	PH	May 11, 2018	English
Leonard Cheshire Disability	Zambia	PH	May 8, 2018	English
SOS Children's Village	Zambia	PH	May 22, 2018	English

German Organization	Zambia	PH	April 26, 2018	English
Norwegian Organization	Zambia	PH	May 3, 2018	English
Canadian Researcher	Zambia	PH	June 14, 2018	English
Coalition of Donors	Zambia	PH	May 8, 2018	English
Albinism Foundation of Zambia	Zambia	PH	April 23, 2018	English
Human Rights Commission	Zambia	PH	April 26, 2018	English
Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection	Zambia	PH	May 11, 2018	English
Disability Rights Watch	Zambia	PH	May 2, 2018	English
Zambia Federation of Disability Organizations	Zambia	PH	June 22, 2018	English
Zambia Agency for Persons with Disability	Zambia	PH	May 15, 2018	English
St. Mathias Mulumba Representative	Zambia	PH	May 22, 2018	English

Malawi Human Rights Commission	Malawi	IN	May 17, 2018	English
Christian Blind Mission International Malawi	Malawi	PH and IN	June 15, 2018	English
DFID – Malawi	Malawi	IN	May 18, 2018	English
Disability in Islam	Malawi	IN	May 30, 2018	English
Sight Savers	Malawi	IN	June 7, 2018	English
Association of People with Albinism in Malawi	Malawi	PH	August 30, 2018	English
Department of Disability and Elderly Affairs	Malawi	PH and IN	June 27, 2018	English
Center for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education	Malawi	IN	September 3, 2018	English
The Malawi Human Rights Commission	Malawi	IN	May 17, 2018	English
Mr. Khuwa	Malawi	IN	July 2, 2018	Chichewa
Mai Nangozo	Malawi	IN	July 2, 2018	Chichewa
Ms. E. Banda	Malawi	IN	July 3, 2018	Chichewa
Mr. E. Mwale	Malawi	IN	July 11, 2018	Chichewa

Ms. Mwenelupembe	Malawi	IN	July 10, 2018	Chichewa
Government Ministry	Zambia	PH	May 8, 2018	English